ROLLING STONES GEARFEST!

Guitar & Bass

GEAR For The YEAR

A feast of new models to savour!

Gretsch & PRS guitar reviews!

PLUS!

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Stratocaster Workshop
Seagull

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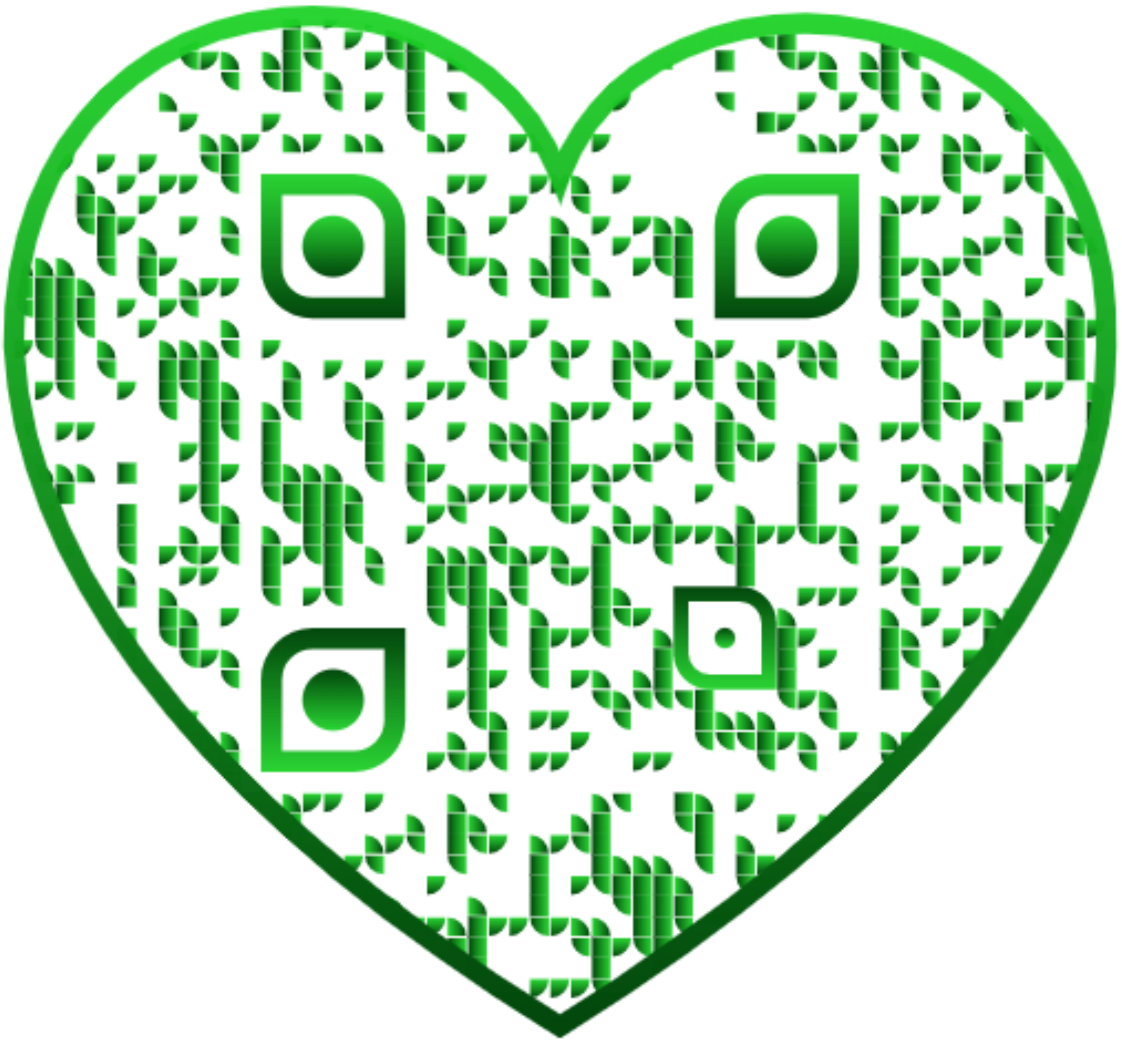
Wood'n'wire wonders



CADILLAC IN MODEL "A" THE WORLD IS YOURS THAT'LL BE THE DAY PEGGY SUE
BABY BLUE LA BAMBA APACHE
LET'S GO TRIPPIN' TRICK BAG
WALK, DON'T RUN MISIRLOU
I FOUGHT THE LAW SURFIN' U.S.A.
HELP ME RHONDA NOWHERE MAN
PURPLE HAZE FIRE
ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE
KICK OUT THE JAMS F.B.I.
ALL ALONG THE WATCHTOWER
THE NIGHT THEY DROVE OLD DIXIE DOWN
BELL BOTTOM BLUES PROUD MARY
WHAT IS LIFE LAYLA
SMOKE ON THE WATER
REELIN' IN THE YEARS
SUPERFLY THAT LADY
YOU AIN'T SEEN NOTHIN' YET
SWEET HOME ALABAMA MONEY
TOO ROLLING STONED
DIXIE CHICKEN MAGIC MAN
CARRY ON MY WAYWARD SON
WALK THIS WAY FREEWAY JAM
BEAST OF BURDEN BAD PENNY
FLY LIKE AN EAGLE
SULTANS OF SWING
WONDERFUL TONIGHT LE FREAK
MY SHARONA LIMELIGHT
COMFORTABLY NUMB
RUN TO THE HILLS MANEATER
ELEPHANT TALK LENNY
PRIDE (IN THE NAME OF LOVE)
OWNER OF A LONELY HEART
CUTS LIKE A KNIFE
ONE THING LEADS TO ANOTHER BIG LOG
YOU GIVE LOVE A BAD NAME
BLACK STAR
PRIDE AND JOY
SHAKESPEARE'S SISTER
FINISH WHAT YA STARTED
SLOW TURNING
SEE A LITTLE LIGHT
SMOKING GUN TUFF ENUFF
SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT
CLIFFS OF DOVER
ENDLESS, NAMELESS
DAMN RIGHT I'VE GOT THE BLUES
WICKED GAME COMEDOWN
BLUE ON BLACK
SWALLOWED
SCAR TISSUE
ALIVE NO RAIN
BULLET WITH BUTTERFLY WINGS
SHOW ME HOW TO LIVE
DAMMIT LAST NITE
MAPS GRAVITY
DIVINIATIONS ABEL
I BET YOU LOOK GOOD ON THE DANCEFLOOR
'TIL SUMMER COMES AROUND
FORGET YOU
BEVERLY HILLS
WHO WOULDN'T FALL IN LOVE WITH YOU
GET LUCKY BLACK CHANDELIER

STRATOCASTER 1954 60 YEARS 2014

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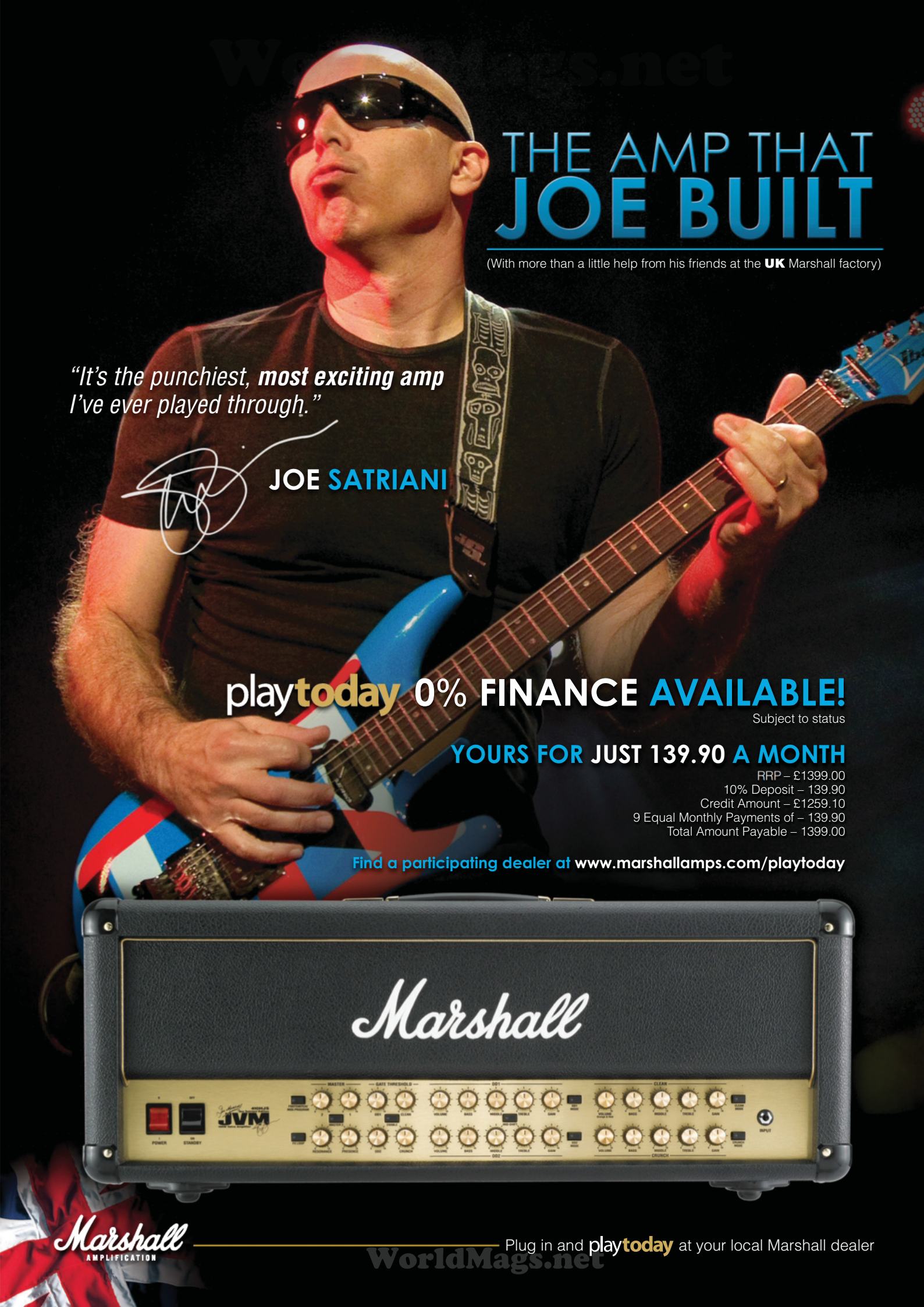

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Electric Guitars

8030 - 1963 Gibson ES175 Jazz Guitar, Sunburst
10067 - Brian May Bass in Cherry with Gig Bag
10066 - Brian May Red Special, Antique Cherry
10055 - Brian May Red Special, Metal May
7028 - Brian May Red Special, Antique Cherry
10065 - Brian May Red Special, Baby Blue
10061 - Brian May Red Special, Black
10063 - Brian May Red Special, Gold
10064 - Brian May Red Special, Green
10059 - Brian May Red Special, Honey Sunburst
10058 - Brian May Red Special, Natural
10057 - Brian May Red Special, Sunburst
10062 - Brian May Red Special, White
10060 - Brian May Red Special, Windermere Blue
10069 - Brian May Rhapsody Electro, Black
10068 - Brian May Rhapsody Electro, Cherry
10071 - Brian May Rhapsody Electro, Red
10070 - Brian May Rhapsody Electro, Sunburst
10231 - Brooks Custom Steve, Lukather Clone
9767 - Cort G260 Electric Guitar
10224 - Cort M600 AVD Antique Violin Dark
10220 - Cort Sunset I in Black
10223 - Cort X6 S-M BK Electric Guitar in Black
7793 - DBZ Barchetta Eminent FR Absinthe
7785 - DBZ Barchetta ST, Aubergine
7789 - DBZ Barchetta ST FR, Cobalt Blue
7814 - DBZ Crucifixion Electric Guitar
7810 - DBZ Dark Angel Electric Guitar
7812 - DBZ Bare Bones Religion Series Devil
7811 - DBZ Bare Bones Religion Series Preacher
7800 - DBZ Bolero AB, Solid Wine Red
7796 - DBZ Bolero FM, Trans Wine
7794 - DBZ Bolero ST, Black
7837 - DBZ Venom, Dark Blue Metallic
9770 - Dean Evo, Pre-Owned
5043 - Duesenberg 49er Cow Limited Edition
5040 - Duesenberg Rocket II in Black & White
10233 - ESP LTD MH50, Black, Pre-Owned
9769 - Encore Electric Guitar, Black
5205 - Epiphone Broadway Jazz Semi, Natural
8220 - Epiphone ES339 Semi Hollowbody, Ebony
9155 - Epiphone ES339, Natural
8528 - Epiphone ES339 Ultra, Vintage Sunburst
5432 - Epiphone G310 SG Shape, White
9631 - Epiphone Joe Pass Emperor II, Natural
9695 - Epiphone Les Paul Special II Cherryburst
9905 - Epiphone LP Stan Plustop Pro, Cherry S/B
10351 - Epiphone LP Stand. Plustop Pro, Wine Red
8365 - Epiphone Les Paul Standard in Gold
10352 - Epiphone Les Paul Standard, Ebony
10217 - Epiphone Les Paul Studio, Sunburst, S/H
9604 - Epiphone Les Paul Ultra III Alpine White
8096 - Epiphone Ltd Ed Flying V, Antique White
8165 - Epiphone Ltd Ed 1961 SG, Alpine White
9666 - Epiphone Phrophecy LP Custom Plus GX
8101 - Epiphone by Gibson, Pre-Owned
4231 - Fender Am Special Strat, Candy Apple Red
9074 - Fender American Special Strat, Sunburst
9914 - Fender Am. Special Tele, Vintage Blonde
9348 - Fender American Stan. Hand Stained Strat
10199 - Fender Am Stand. Strat LH, Sburst
9910 - Fender Am Standard Strat, Mystic Blue
8342 - Fender Am Standard Strat, Sienna Sburst
9134 - Fender American Stratocaster Daphne Blue
9023 - Fender American Vintage '70s Strat Reissue, Nat
9287 - Fender Blacktop Stratocaster HH, Black
10072 - Fender Classic Player Baja Telecaster, Blonde
9261 - Fender C. Player Jaguar Spec HH, White
9559 - Fender Custom Shop 1960 Relic Strat, GR
7112 - Fender Deluxe Lonestar Strat, Sunburst
10163 - Fender FSR 72 Telecaster Deluxe, Aqua Flake
10198 - Fender FSR Am Stan. Strat, LH, Sunburst
9085 - Fender FSR Strat HSS TBX Amber Burst
10218 - Fender Japanese Strat, CAR, Pre-Owned
4634 - Fender Jim Root Signature Strat, Black
9775 - Fender Johnny Marr Jaguar, Metallic KO
10164 - Fender Kurt Cobain Mustang, Sonic Blue
8113 - Fender Modern Player Available To Order
9945 - Fender Modern Player Strat HSS, O. White
8224 - Fender Modern Player Telecaster, Honey Burst
8286 - Fender Modern Player Tele Thinline Delux
7784 - Fender Mustang Pawn Shop Special, Red
9089 - Fender Pawn Shop 51 Stratocaster, Black
9090 - Fender Pawn Shop 51 Stratocaster, Blonde
10149 - Fender Pink Paisley Telecaster, Used
5287 - Fender Road Worn 50s Strat in Black
8290 - Fender Road Worn 60's Strat, Sunburst
4229 - Fender Road Worn Player Strat, Sunburst
4232 - Fender Road Worn Player Tele, Black
9449 - Fender Select Tele USA Violin Burst
10101 - Fender Standard Strat, CAR, Secondhand
7954 - Fender Standard Strat, Copper Met Burst
4560 - Fender Standard Telecaster, Black
4748 - Fender Standard Tele, Brown Sunburst
10090 - Fender Telebration Mahogany Tele, Sburst
9911 - Fender USA 75 Telebration, Natural
9507 - Fender USA Hardtail Stratocaster 1977
8285 - Fret King Jerry Donahue, Natural
9137 - G&L ASAT Classic Bluesboy Semi, Natural
9140 - G&L ASAT Classic in Walnut
9136 - G&L Legacy in Black
9135 - G&L S500 in Blueburst
9150 - Gibson ES137 Custom, Triburst
8029 - Gibson ES175 1956 Original
9277 - Gibson ES330 VOS, Vintage Sunburst
10146 - Gibson ES335 Dot Plain Gloss, Sunburst

Electric Guitars

10273 - Gibson ES339 Antique Sunburst
9840 - Gibson Lee Roy Parnell Goldtop
8376 - Gibson Les Paul Classic 60s Trans Ebony
5317 - Gibson Les Paul Custom in Alpine White
7919 - Gibson Les Paul Custom in Wine Red
10197 - Gibson Les Paul Signature T, Trans Ebony
9444 - Gibson Les Paul Standard 2012 Goldtop
10116 - Gibson Les Paul Std 2013 Prem. Tea Burst
10117 - Gibson Les Paul Std 2013 Premi. Trans Amber
10144 - Gibson LP St Premium Plus, Desert Burst
10322 - Gibson Les Paul Stand., Heritage Cherry
9341 - Gibson Les Paul Studio, Radiant Red
5090 - Gibson Les Paul Studio Lefty, Wine Red
9557 - Gibson Les Paul Studio, Vintage Sunburst
10281 - Gibson Les Paul Trad., Caramel Burst
8202 - Gibson Nighthawk. Pelham Blue
5594 - Gibson SG Special Electric Guitar in White
10350 - Gibson SG Special Faded Cherry
10268 - Gretsch G5422TDCG Hollow Body ,White
9771 - Ibanez S470DXQM
9764 - Italia Electric Guitar, Pre-Owned
9161 - Jackson RR5 Japanese Ivory Pinstripe
4992 - Jackson JS30 Randy Rhoads, Black
4150 - Jackson SL3MG Soloist, Natural
9669 - Jackson Super Light Soloist SLSXMG GMG
0000 - Levin - 7 models in stock now
8051 - Lodestone Electric Artist, Trans Black
8052 - Lodestone Electric Artist in Sunburst
8048 - Lodestone Electric Artist, Trans Honey
8049 - Lodestone Electric Artist, Trans Red
8059 - Lodestone Electric Pro S, Chignal Blue
8065 - Lodestone Electric Pro S, Rodings White
8058 - Lodestone Electric Pro S, Tobacco Sburst
8066 - Lodestone Electric Pro S in Waltham Black
8055 - Lodestone Electric Pro, Chignal Blue
8056 - Lodestone Electric Pro, Rodings White
8053 - Lodestone Electric Pro, Roxwell Red
8057 - Lodestone Electric Pro, St James Silver
8054 - Lodestone Electric Pro, Tobacco Sunburst
8072 - Lodestone Electric Standard S, T. Sburst
8070 - Lodestone Electric Standard Trans Black
8071 - Lodestone Electric Standard S, White
8069 - Lodestone Electric Standard in White
8085 - Lodestone Pulse in Burr Maple Honeyburst
8086 - Lodestone Pulse, Matt Black
8084 - Lodestone Pulse in Metallic Gold
8087 - Lodestone Pulse, Tobacco Sunburst
7091 - MusicMan Luke HSS, Pearl Blue
4720 - MusicMan Silhouette Special, Candy Red
0000 - PRS - 12 Models in stock now
6123 - Patrick Eggle Double Cutaway in Blue
6121 - Patrick Eggle RSG Electric Guitar, Amber
9478 - Peavey AT200 Antares AutoTune Guitar
9450 - Peavey EVH Wolfgang USA-Made Goldtop
9001 - Peavey Rockmaster Captain America
9300 - Peerless Martin Taylor Virtuoso
4268 - Rickenbacker 330 12 String Semi, Jetglo
6951 - Rickenbacker 360 Semi, Fireglo
6952 - Rickenbacker 360 Semi, Jetglo
4270 - Rickenbacker 360 Semi, Mapleglo
10165 - Road Worn Player Tele, Candy Apple Red
8992 - Roland G5 Strat COSM Technology Black
8993 - Roland G5 Strat COSM Technology Sunburst
9857 - Roland G5A Strat Candy Apple Red
8990 - Roland GC1 Black GK-Ready Stratocaster
8991 - Roland GC1 Sunburst GK-Ready Strat
0000 - Squier - 6 models in stock now
0000 - Stagg - 3 models in stock now
9273 - Steinberger Spirit GT Pro
10131 - Traveller Speedster, Blue, Pre-Owned
9079 - Ventures VM100SB Bob Bogle Sig, Sunburst
9078 - Ventures VM65MBL Electric Guitar, Blue
4256 - Vintage AV2, Sunburst
9420 - Vox Apache I
9652 - Warwick Electric Guitar Accessory Pack
6982 - Washburn USADD70MayaDanDonegan,Grey
4757 - Washburn N1 Vintage Nuno Bettencourt Nat
7074 - Washburn SI61 Obey Scott Ian Sig, Black
6991 - Washburn USA Custom WI556, Metallic Red
6997 - Washburn V200 ProE in Black
7005 - Washburn WI100, Gunmetal Grey
7002 - Washburn WI100, Red
7009 - Washburn WI15 Idol Standard ,Black
8412 - Washburn WI18 Idol Quilted Trans Black
8411 - Washburn WI18 Idol Quilted Trans Red
7356 - Washburn WI420KB Idol, Black
8409 - Washburn WI-440F Idol Elect Flame Honey
8408 - Washburn WI-440F Idol Tobacco Sunburst
8406 - Washburn WI-460E Idol Electric, Black
8405 - Washburn WI-460E Idol Electric in White
6988 - Washburn WI50 in Black
6989 - Washburn WI50 Pro-E, Black
8404 - Washburn WI-63 SF Donegan Sig, Black
6995 - Washburn WV40VASIK Scott Ian Blood Splat
6996 - Washburn WV66ANC, Nick Catanese, Black
6898 - Washburn WI14 Idol in Metallic Blue
6899 - Washburn WI14 Idol in Wine Red
8230 - Washburn X10 Bass Guitar, Black
6895 - Washburn X100 in Metallic Grey
6900 - Washburn X200 Pro in Trans Black
6425 - Westcoast ST Junior in Black & Sunburst
6449 - Westcoast ST1 in Ivory, Red & Natural
8416 - Yamaha Pacifica 012 in Red Metallic
8414 - Yamaha Pacifica 012, Dark Blue Metallic
10234 - Yamaha Pacifica 012 in Black
8121 - Yamaha Pacifica 311H, Vintage White
8184 - Yamaha Pacifica 510V , Candy Apple Red
10319 - Yamaha Pacifica 611 VHFM
8124 - Yamaha Pacifica 611 Root Beer

Acoustic & Electro Acoustics

8033 - Breedlove AD25/SM
8035 - Breedlove AJ250/SF Plus Electro Acoustic
10296 - Breedlove Atlas Solo Series C350/CR
10284 - Breedlove Cascade C25/CRE Electro
10285 - Breedlove Cascade OM/CRe S Cutaway
10287 - Breedlove Passport C250/COe Electro
10288 - Breedlove Passport D/MMe Electro
10289 - Breedlove Passport D250SMe Electro
10299 - Breedlove Passport PLUS D/CME Electro
10292 - Breedlove Passport Plus C250/SBe Elect
7979 - Breedlove Passport Plus C250SFE
4282 - Breedlove Passport + D/SFE Elec Sunburst
10301 - Breedlove Passport Plus D250/SB Electro
10300 - Breedlove Passport Plus OM/CMe HH
10294 - Breedlove Retro D/ERe with LR Baggs
10295 - Breedlove Retro OM/ER Orchestra Electro
10298 - Breedlove Revival OM/SMe Top Burst
4283 - Breedlove Solo C35/Sme Electro, Natural
10069 - Brian May Rhapsody Electro, Black
10068 - Brian May Rhapsody Electro, Cherry
10071 - Brian May Rhapsody Electro, Red
10070 - Brian May Rhapsody Electro, Sunburst
10219 - Cort NDX50 Electro Acoustic Guitar, Nat
10221 - Cort SFX-E NS Electro, Natural Satin
10125 - DRL 008 8 String Electro Acoustic Guitar
10124 - DRL CT09 Thinline Electro Acoustic
4769 - EKO Ranger EQ Vintage Series, Black
8905 - Eko Ranger Vintage 12 String w/Fishman
9206 - Epiphone EJ200CE, Natural
5157 - Epiphone EJ200CE Jumbo Vintage SunB.
9542 - Faith FMETB Mercury Electro Parlour
9104 - Faith Saturn Cutaway High Gloss FSCEHG
8300 - Faith FECS Electro Acoustic Guitar
10320 - Fender CD60CE Mahogany
7881 - Fender Kingman SCE, Dreadnought, Nat
6929 - Fender Stratacoustic, Electro, Black
10194 - Fender T-Bucket 300CE, Amber
6930 - Fender Telecoustic, Electro, Black
10243 - Fender Tim Armstrong Deluxe
10106 - Fylde Alchemist Electro Acoustic
7867 - Gibson J200 Standard Electro in Natural
7032 - Gibson J200 Standard Jumbo Guitar
8241 - Gibson J200 Studio, Vintage Sunburst
10150 - Gibson J35 Electro Acoustic Guitar, Nat
10143 - Gibson LG2 American Eagle
10147 - Gibson SJ100 Modern Classic V.Sunburst
8091 - Jimmy Moon 0003CE Electro Acoustic
4555 - Jimmy Moon Bryan Adams Signature
4554 - Jimmy Moon PF0003 Electro, Pau Ferro
6948 - Jimmy Moon RD3, Electro, Natural
9552 - LAG T300AE Electro Acoustic Guitar
7302 - LAG T66ACE Auditorium Cutaway Electro
7972 - LAG T200ACE Auditorium Cutaway Electric
5403 - Levin LD60CE, Dreadnought Electro, Nat
9243 - James Neligan NA72CBB Electro Acoustic
0000 - Levin - 5 models in stock now
8277 - Martin DC15ME Dreadnought Cutaway
6404 - Northwood R70 00 14fret Electro, Natural
4400 - Northwood R80, 000V Electro, Natural
6403 - Northwood R80, 0M Electro, Natural
9841 - Ovation Adamas 1581-7 Electro Acoustic
5093 - Ovation CDX24 Electro Acoustic in Natural
10033 - Ovation Celebrity CC44S AB, Autumn
10031 - Ovation Pro Elite 2078AX
10032 - Ovation Pro Elite TX 1868TX Super
10151 - Ovation Pro Speciality 1773AX-4 Natural,
9299 - Peerless Martin Taylor Maestro
10095 - RainSong BI-JM1000N2 Graphite Guitar
10094 - Rainsong S-DR1000 Graphite Guitar
10038 - Rainsong S-DR1000 Graphite Guitar
9820 - Rainsong CO-DR1000N2
9821 - Rainsong CO-JM1000N2
9819 - Rainsong CO-OM1000N2
9818 - Rainsong CO-WS1000N2
9814 - Rainsong DR1000 Graphite Guitar
10097 - Rainsong H-DR1100N2
10100 - Rainsong H-OM1000N2
10098 - Rainsong H-WS1000N2
9815 - Rainsong JM1000 Graphite Guitar
4812 - RainSong OM1000
10082 - RainSong P12 Parlor
10084 - RainSong P12 Parlor in Blue
10086 - RainSong P12 Parlor in Green
10085 - RainSong P12 Parlor in Pewter
10087 - RainSong P12 Parlor in Red
10088 - RainSong P14 Parlor
10091 - RainSong P14 Parlor in Blue
10092 - RainSong P14 Parlor in Green
10093 - RainSong P14 Parlor in Pewter
10089 - RainSong P14 Parlor in Red
9824 - Rainsong S-DR1000N2 Dreadnought Std
9823 - Rainsong S-OM1000N2 OM Studio Electro
9822 - Rainsong S-WS1000N2 WS Studio Electro
9827 - RainSong SG Shorty Gloss Shorty Series
9828 - RainSong Shorty Fine Texture SFT Model
7974 - Rainsong WS1000 Graphite Guitar
5257 - Satori YD18EQ, Dreadnought Electro, Nat
5256 - Satori YD28EQ, Dreadnought Electro, Nat
5252 - Satori YD28HEQ, Dreadnought Electro, Nat
8234 - Satori YD42EQ Electro Acoustic
5255 - Satori YO28HEQ, OM Electro, Natural
9536 - Sigma 000MC 15E Electro Acoustic Guitar
10303 - Takamine EG340SC, Pre-Owned
0000 - Tanglewood - 17 models in stock now
10118 - Terry Pack PLSR Parlour w/Pre-Amp
9615 - Terry Pack SJRS Small Jumbo LR Baggs M1A
8007 - Vintage Gordon Giltrap Signature
9561 - Vintage VEC1400 Electro Acoustic
9535 - Walden CG570CE Electro Acoustic Guitar
8307 - Westcoast SW201BK -VT Acoustic Guitar
8305 - Westcoast SW201RDS VT Electro Acoustic
8306 - Westcoast SW201VT Acoustic Guitar
6960 - Yamaha CPX500 Electro in Red
9190 - Yamaha CPX700 Electro Dusk Sun Red
8020 - Yamaha CPX700, Tinted Finish
9191 - Yamaha FGX730SC Electro Acoustic, Nat.
9192 - Yamaha FJX730SC Electro Acoustic, Black
6965 - Yamaha FX370C Electro Acoustic in Nat.
8141 - Yamaha SLG110S Silent Steel String

Bass Guitars

8687 - Breedlove Passport Plus B350/CB4
10297 - Breedlove Solo BJ350/CMe4 Fretless Bass
10067 - Brian May Bass in Cherry with Gig Bag
4910 - Bridge Cetus Electric Double Bass
10108 - Cort A4 4 String Bass Guitar, Natural
10107 - Cort A4 Custom Z 4 String Bass Guitar
10109 - Cort A5 5 String Bass, Open Pore Natural
10105 - Cort A5 OPBC Bass Guitar
10110 - Cort B5 5 String Bass Guitar, OPN
10213 - Cort GB75WBL 5 String Bass, White Blonde
10242 - ESP LTD B204 SM, Natural, Pre-Owned
4882 - Fender USA 62 Vintage Precision Sunburst
10166 - Fender 75 Jazz Bass in Natural
9083 - Fender Am Special Jazz Bass, Sunburst
9353 - Fender Am St Hand Stained Ash Jazz Bass
9231 - Fender Am Standard Jazz Bass, Sunburst
7943 - Fender Am Stan Precision Bass, Sunburst
9727 - Fender FSR Precision, Sea Foam Metallic
8113 - Fender Modern Player Available To Order
9367 - Fender Select Jazz Bass, Amber Burst
9284 - Fender Standard Jazz Bass, Arctic White
8287 - Fender Standard Jazz Bass, Brown S.burst
9909 - Fender Standard P Bass, Lake Placid Blue
10113 - G & L M2000 4 String Bass Guitar, Honeyburst
10112 - G & L M2500 5 String Bass, Honeyburst
9703 - G & L Tribute Series JB2, Natural
9138 - G&L L2000 Tribute Bass, 3-Tone Sunburst
9702 - G&L L2500 5 String Bass, Walnut
9593 - Gibson Firebird Studio Reverse 70s Bass
9575 - Gibson Grabber 3 '70s Tribute Honeyburst
10074 - Gretsch G6073 Electrotone Bass, Burgundy
0000 - Levin - 7 models in stock now
8073 - Lodestone Primal Artist
8075 - Lodestone Primal Instinct J Bass, Green
8079 - Lodestone Primal Instinct P Bass, Green
8080 - Lodestone Primal Instinct Pbass Sunburst
8081 - Lodestone Primal Pro in Chignal Blue
8082 - Lodestone Primal Pro 4, Tobacco Sunburst
8174 - Lodestone Primal Pro 5, Chignal Blue
4179 - Marleaux Consat Custom 5, Satin Black
10279 - Marleaux Consat Sig 4 String Bolt On
5713 - Marleaux M Bass Custom 5, Maple & Walnut
10278 - Marleaux Votan XS Deluxe, Black
10216 - MusicMan Sterling 4, Blue, Pre-Owned
4703 - MusicMan Stingray 2EQ, Blue Pearl
4781 - MusicMan Stingray 3EQ, True Gold
4920 - MusicMan Stingray 5, Black
8997 - Musicman Sterling SB14 Bass, Sunburst
5110 - NS Design NXT Electric Double Bass
9002 - Overwater Aspiration Deluxe Bass, Black
8435 - Overwater Aspiration Std 4, Black Cherry
7849 - Overwater Contemporary Jazz, Trans Blue
9009 - Overwater Contemporary 5-String Bass
9867 - Overwater Inspiration Jazz PJ 4 String
10102 - Overwater J Series Deluxe 4, Natural
7259 - Overwater Perception Std 5, Bubinga
10152 - Overwater Progress Deluxe, Pre-Owned
9418 - Rickenbacker Bass, Jetglo Rick Kemp
5121 - Rockbass Streamer LX5, Black
7204 - Squier Classic Vibe Precision 50s Blonde
9072 - Squier Vintage Modified 70's Jazz, Nat
9517 - Squier Vintage Modified Tele Bass, Black
9704 - Stagg BC300 Lefthanded 4 String, Nat
4417 - Steinberger Spirit XT2 4 String Bass
9428 - Tobias Toby Standard IV Bass Guitar, White
9653 - Warwick Bass Guitar Accessory Gig Pack
6447 - Westcoast BG2, Natural or Trans Red
6446 - Westcoast BG4 Neck Thru Body, Brown
6445 - Westcoast BG5 Fretless, Natural
6448 - Westcoast JB5, Trans Amber
8438 - Westcoast JP1 4 String Bass in Black
8437 - Westcoast JP1 4 String Bass in Trans Red
10120 - Yamaha BB1024X 4 String, Caramel Brown
4649 - Yamaha BB2024X, Vintage White
9350 - Yamaha BB424 Bass Guitar in Black
9351 - Yamaha BB425 5 String Bass Guitar, Black
9352 - Yamaha BB425 5 String Bass, Sunburst
9000 - Yamaha RBX170
10314 - Yamaha RBX170EW Bass
8999 - Yamaha RBX5A2 5 String Bass, Black
6360 - Yamaha SLB200 Silent Double Bass
4331 - Yamaha TRB1004J, Trans Black
10307 - Yamaha TRBX304 Bass
10308 - Yamaha TRBX305 Bass
10310 - Yamaha TRBX505 Bass

Classical Guitars

0000 - Azahar - 6 models in stock now
10290 - Breedlove Passport N250/COe Electro
7365 - Jose Ferrer 3/4 Size Classical Guitar
0000 - Mendieta - 6 models in stock now
9482 - Ovation 1616 Classical Guitar, Pre-Owned
0000- Raimundo - 4 models in stock now
0000 - Ramirez - 10 models in stock now
5828 - Roberto - 3 models in stock now
5481 - Strunal Electro Classical Guitar
9404 - Takamine G344RC Electro, Wine Red
0000 - Tanglewood - 4 models in stock now
8351 - Westcoast - 5 models in stock now
10323 - Yamaha CGX102 Guitar
10321 - Yamaha NTX700 Guitar

For full guitar details, pricing and photos, enter the number next to each guitar model into our SKU search facility on the website.

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Guitar & Bass

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News and current affairs...

For all the talk about coolness and rock'n'roll, guitar culture (and that includes the likes of us) can often be quite conservative and retro-leaning. So this month's cover story is unashamedly focused on the new models that were unveiled at the NAMM Show in California recently. Regardless of whether you're in the market for new gear or not, there's no doubting the pleasure of running your eye over what's coming out this year and seeing what grabs your attention – and in our humble opinion, there's plenty of gear due out in 2014 that's potentially worth of your admiration.

If you're a gear-hardy soul, feel free to go from our cover story straight to the reviews section, where offerings from Gretsch, Tone King and Seagull await your perusal. Spencer Davis and Adrian Belew take up time in the *G&B* interview chair this issue, and there's some proper droolworthy coverage of Rolling Stones guitars to treat your peepers to...

Throw in our usual mix of vintage and workshops (there's a particularly fine Superstrat-related one in this issue to check out) and we hope it's enough to entertain you for the next wee while. And if you're looking for some guitar-based sustenance before the next issue comes out, feel free to check out www.guitar-bass.net and click away at whatever your heart desires. We hope you enjoy the issue.

John

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The annual trek to California always throws up great new gear and some big surprises. *Guitar & Bass* sets out to select the very best

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Gear

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Lovers of the extended low-end need not feel ignored by the Maryland maker anymore – and it's pretty darn affordable, too

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If you were torn between the greasy Falcon and the Deluxe-flavoured Imperial, this latest Tone King amp gets you both in one sweet package

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Overdrive, tone, loop connections and compression all in a toothsome purple box

35% OFF when you subscribe
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Vintage

Private Collection 94
Tom Doughty made the most of his challenges and changed musical paths to become a keen exponent and collector of slide guitars, from Nationals to Weissenborns and lap steels

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Reverberations

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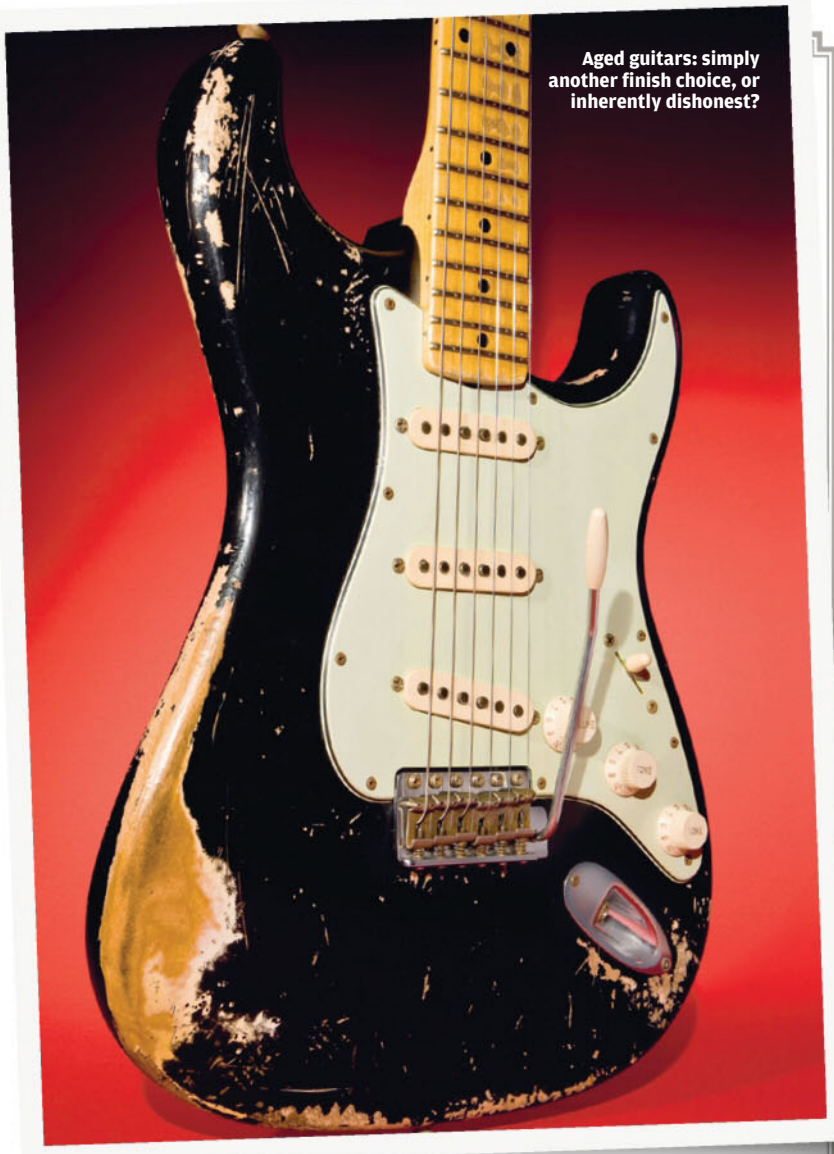
Please note, we reserve the right to edit where we feel it is appropriate, or to print extracts from longer correspondences

STAR LETTER

EARN YOUR SCARS



Aged guitars: simply another finish choice, or inherently dishonest?

I always enjoy the letters pages and have often composed a letter in my head to send in, but never actually got around to do so – but a recent email from a guitar shop advertising what's new prompted me put pen to paper.

I wonder when are guitar manufacturers going to get a grip? New 'vintage' guitars are not 'really' vintage – we're getting vintage, road worn, and replicas by the bucketload. There are now as many tribute guitars as there are tribute bands. A new guitar beat about the head with a chain and a piece of sandpaper and with its metal parts left out in the rain is not really a relic. Relics are made by hard-working musicians who use their instrument to earn a living.

When my guitars were looking ragged from hard work I used to start dreaming and saving for my next brand spanking new flawless axe. And when I got it, I didn't cry when it got its first dent or scratch, I just carried on and soon it had a few more war wounds.

Just imagine if we reverse the process and take a 1954 Gibson Les Paul Black Beauty that's seen a hard life. We strip it down, replace the pickups and tuners, install new wiring, rub it down, fill in all the dents, give it a spray job (I can almost see some of you breaking into a cold sweat). Once that's done, let's advertise it as a virtually new 'reborn vintage', and charge a huge fee for the work we've done.

Well, listen up! When I worked in a music shop in Cardiff during the early '70s, I actually did this; not an LP but to many of the '60s Fender Strats/Teles and other makes from that era. I took them in as part-exchange for new Gibsons and Fenders. And guess what? The best way to sell those old guitars was to tart them up and make them look all shiny and new again (now I get the feeling that some of you would like to strangle me!). I get the point that guitar manufacturers have to make a living, as do the middlemen, but still cannot see the point of making a beautiful new instrument and then making it look a mess, or like a copy of celebrity player's mess. I say, get a nice new one and make a pig's ear out of it yourself. Then you'll have the unique vintage guitar you've always dreamed about. You'll also know where every mark came from – and how it got there.

Neil Hank Hillman *via email*

Rosetti

Written a Star Letter? Contact Rosetti on 01376 550033 to claim your Rickenbacker goodie bag

G&B **Well argued, sir, and we always appreciate a good confessional around here. We'll admit that we don't completely agree; we don't think your opinions are wrong, but in the same way you should be allowed to buy, play and love guitars the way you want them, we've got no problem with a guitar player who likes the 'relic' look and is willing to play for the privilege. If there's a guitar of any kind and condition that appeals to every player, we've yet to come across it... and that's a good thing. So we'll throw this open to the debating floor: do you agree or disagree with Neil? Please let us know.**

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THE SHOCK OF THE NEW

If anyone is looking for a reason to get a bunch of guitars, I've got a good one. I've been playing a Strat for over 20 years now. I'm now on my fourth Strat since I first got one as teenager. This Christmas just gone, I treated myself to a secondhand Gibson Les Paul. And guess what? I really can't get on with it. I had the guitar checked over by a mate, and he says it's fine. I've spent the last couple of weeks trying out various guitars he has; I've even been to a couple of shops and tried out other non-Strat models, and I haven't felt comfortable playing any of them. Now, I'm not whining about this. I've always been perfectly happy with my Strats – it's just the realisation that they're the only guitar I can play is a bit galling. Anyway, just thought I give a warning to all you young guitar players out there. When it comes to guitars, make sure you play the field!

Simon Dunleavy *via email*

G&B **We're sorry to hear about your predicament. If you've been playing one type of guitar for a long time then it's understandable for it to be strange to play a different kind. Although there are plenty of true tales about people clicking instantly with an instrument straight away, it often takes a bit of time. It might be worth you persevering with your new purchase for a little bit longer. However, as you say, as long as you enjoy playing a guitar you have, there's no harm or shame in realising you don't get on with a guitar for any reason.**

SHY OF ATTENTION

Maybe it's just me, but I've always been drawn to the 'unfashionable' guitarists in a guitar duo. I'm talking about the likes of Bruce Welch in the Shadows, or Brad Whitford in Aerosmith – the kind of people that seem to never get mentioned. Having been in plenty of bands over the years alongside 'showy' (and, it must be said, better-looking and more talented) guitar players, I've developed an affinity with these kind of guitarists. There seems to be this view that all guitar players are show-offs who crave attention, but I'm not like that, and I'm sure there are other guitar players out there who are happy to play, fade into the background and let others take the applause (not that the bands I've been in have got too much over the years). Could you do a feature on such quiet guitar heroes? Let's hear it for the introverted six-stringers!

Ben Houseman *via email*

G&B **We'd argue that plenty of people (us included) appreciate the talents of the likes of Bruce Welch. But we take your point, Ben, regarding the stereotype of guitar players. That said, the cliché also extends to people turning to the guitar because they are introverted and learn the guitar as a means of gaining confidence and impressing people. We also have interviewed plenty of professional guitar players who come across as criminally shy; some of them are just the same onstage, whilst others act like rock gods when performing. Going back to the likes of Bruce Welch and Brad Whitford, we agree they shouldn't be overlooked simply because they play alongside more celebrated guitar players. To start the ball rolling, if anyone reading this wants to shine a spotlight on a guitar player who doesn't get the same attention as the other six-stringer in the band, please let us know who it is, and why they should be celebrated.**

MORE PLACE FOR BASS

Having read your magazine for many years, I was disappointed to get your Feb 14 edition. You are supposed to cater for bass players, but there is very little content regarding the bass. Apart from two adverts, there is nothing until page 74 about bass guitars. A single bass guitar review and one amp review about sums up the Feb edition. Not good enough, really.

Steve Perry *via email*

G&B **We're sorry that you didn't feel the bass coverage is sufficient in the Feb 14 edition, Steve. Like a lot of aspects of the magazine, the bass coverage can vary slightly between issues. Do you agree with Steve regarding the bass coverage in the magazine? Please let us know. If you're genuinely in for only the bass coverage or the guitar coverage, that's a perfectly valid opinion. However, please refrain from the old 'one instrument is better than the other' argument. If you like one more than the other, fair play... but that old chestnut is too tedious and pointless to go over.**

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Woke up this mornin'... NEWS

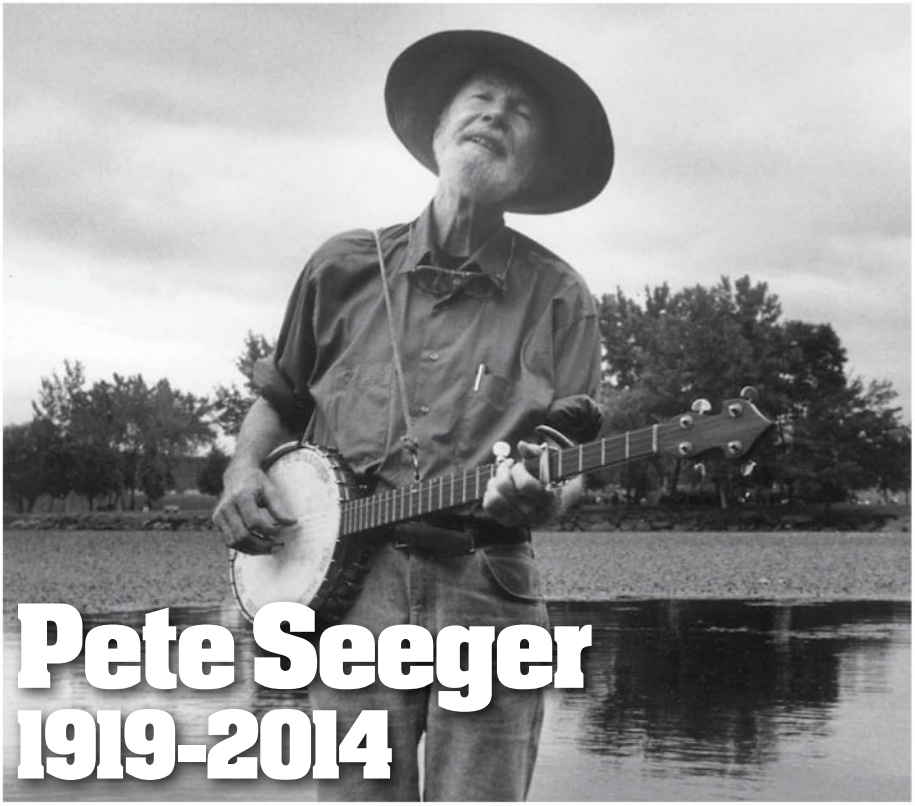

Photo: Chris Felver/Archive/Getty

Pete Seeger 1919-2014

Once banned, now praised, Seeger was a tireless troubadour, a pioneering instrumentalist and a leader of the folk generation

Few people had greater influence over the flowering of folk and blues in the '40s, '50s and '60s than Pete Seeger. Songs like *If I Had A Hammer, Where Have All The Flowers Gone* and his version of *We Shall Overcome* have had a profound effect on American music, not to mention providing anthems for US political protest movements.

Pete Seeger was in New York City in 1919. His mother was a concert violinist and his father was the chair of the Music Department of the University of California and was an early champion of ethnic American music. He began playing the ukulele at the age of eight, and moved on to banjo by 16, then the 12-string guitar; he later invented the long-neck banjo, and wrote a tuition book that many credit as their first introduction to the instrument. He went to Harvard to read journalism and sociology but dropped out in 1939 to travel and play music. Famed musicologist and early blues recordist Alan Lomax recruited him to help seek out the great blues and folk singers during his wandering, and around this period he also hooked up with folk legend Woody Guthrie; later, Woody would join Seeger's first band, the Almanac Singers, in the early 1940s. Lyrics were often anti-war and left-leaning, but that didn't stop the patriotic Seeger serving his time in the army during World War II.

On being demobbed he formed People's Songs, a movement that organised events where attendees shared a love of roots music and leftwing political ideals. This and the subsequent Sing Out! campaign eventually lead to problems with the McCarthy-era communist witchhunts, though Pete still managed his first major commercial success at this time with his band the Weavers. Songs like *Goodnight Irene, On Top Of Old Smokey* and *The Roving Kind* made him a genuine pop star before the group were blacklisted and banned from the radio in 1952. Their recording contract was revoked, and the band split in 1953.

It wasn't until the 1960s that Seeger's work was rehabilitated with folk revival covers from the likes of Peter, Paul and Mary, the Kingston Singers and the Byrds. Soon he was appearing on stage alongside Dylan, Joan Baez and Joni Mitchell. Throughout his entire life he campaigned tirelessly for his beliefs and to promote the music he loved. The musical landscape would be very different now without his devotion.

Abbey Road Lectures

Abbey Road will open the doors of the legendary Studio 2 for lectures which explore the evolution of recording techniques and equipment, many of which were pioneered right there. The hosts will be Brian Kehew and Kevin Ryan, authors of critically acclaimed book *Recording The Beatles*, and special guest speaker will be former Abbey Road Studios engineer Ken Scott. Lectures will include demonstrations of both new and vintage equipment, some of which was put to good use on landmark recordings. It promises to be a fascinating event. Lectures will run from 25-27 April and 2-4 May with 12 sessions in total. Entry costs £88.40. Go to www.seetickets.com for more details.

NORTH EAST GUITAR SHOW ON THE MOVE

The North East guitar show has a new home. On Sunday 16th March it'll open its doors at the Rainton Meadows Arena, Mercantile Rd, Houghton-le-Spring DH4 5PH, near Durham. More than 100 dealers should supply you with ample opportunity to peruse new, used and vintage guitars, and free appraisals of instruments, live music and workshops will all combine to provide a great day out for guitar aficionados. Entry costs just £6 and the show runs from 10am-4pm. See www.guitarshows.co.uk or call 01925 813185.

Fender Custom Shop Hitmaker

Fender has honoured the king of the hitmakers Nile Rodgers with a Custom Shop signature Strat. As guitarist, producer, composer and arranger, Nile's total sales top 100 million albums, and the Strat he dubbed 'the hitmaker' has always been on hand. The original has a 1960 body with a '59 neck, is exceptionally light in weight and Rodgers claims it sounds like no other Strat in the world. The Custom Shop Hitmaker has an alder body, a 9.5" radius maple fingerboard, three Custom Shop 1969 single coils and a relic Olympic white finish. See www.fendercustomshop.com.

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THE GIBSON GOVT SERIES

Back in 2009 and 2011 Gibson's Nashville factory was raided by federal US government agents who believed the company may have been illegally importing rare wood. Gibson was eventually completely cleared of any wrongdoing, but rather than sweep the events under the carpet they have decided to capitalise on the publicity. The rosewood which was seized has been now been returned and, rather cheekily, is being used to create the Government Series II. The series logo features a bald eagle with its talons wrapped around a Gibson guitar neck. You can own a controversial piece of Gibson history in the shape of a Les Paul, SG, Flying V, or an Explorer; all come in Government Tan finish and have extra-hot Dirty Fingers+ humbuckers suitable for rock'n'roll rebels.

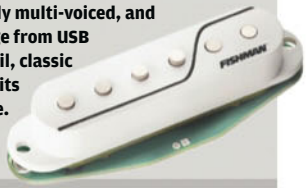
Behold the Majesty of John Petrucci

Dream Theater's lucky John Petrucci gets a new Music Man signature guitar every year, but his 2014 model, the Majesty, is a bit special. Far more evolved than any previous effort, it's built around a set mahogany through-neck that runs all the way through the body, with basswood wings attached to the sides. The middle section may look like carbon fibre, but it's actually a small section of 'laser etched' maple. There's a floating tremolo bridge which hides a piezo pickup, the ebony fingerboard carries 24 frets, the push/push volume knob brings in a 22dB gain boost, and there's also a coil tap on the DiMarzio Illuminator pickups; the jack is instantly switchable between mono and stereo, too. All this, plus the choice of six or seven strings, and this model also has the best fret access of any Music Man to date. See www.music-man.com for all the details.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Fishman reinvent the pickup

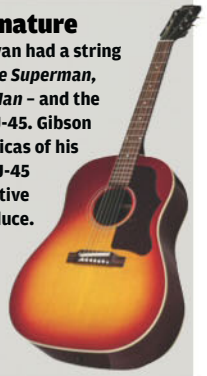
This is something: acoustic pickup specialists Fishman have taken it upon themselves to turn the way we have come to expect electric guitar pickups to be made upside down. Fluence pickups, they say, are the first 'truly new' pickup design in 80 years. There's no copper wire, and they claim to have eliminated spurious noise, hum and cable capacitance problems. More than that, all the pickups are actually multi-voiced, and being active, charge from USB chargers. Single coil, classic and humbucker units will all be available. More at www.fishman.com.



360 Degrees Of Vai

A new app, Vai360°, promises a revolutionary virtual experience, bringing you into the world of Steve Vai using interactive 360-degree spherical cameras. You can take a tour around Steve's studio, Harmony Hut, narrated by the man himself, which takes in his extensive guitar collection, and you can enjoy three songs from his Hammersmith Apollo gig during which you can control the camera angles and use the built-in gyroscope. It's kind of like a documentary crossed with Google Street View. There's plenty of extra features too. The future of visual entertainment, or just a whizzy new gimmick? Either way, a snip at £2.99.

Gibson Donovan Signature



'60s singer-songwriter Donovan had a string of hits in the 1960s – *Sunshine Superman, Mellow Yellow, Hurdy Gurdy Man* – and the guitar that featured was his J-45. Gibson Montana have made 300 replicas of his trusty acoustic and the 1965 J-45 Donovan Model is representative of the finest that Gibson produce. It has a solid spruce top, mahogany back and sides, a '60s style radiused body and comes equipped with an LR Baggs Lyric system. It'll set you back around £2200.

Calendar SHOWS, GIGS, FESTIVALS, WORKSHOPS

Blues Caravan 10th Anniversary

17-19 MARCH

Ruf Records blues showcase: in 2014 it's Laurence Jones, Christina Skjolberg and Albert Castiglia
WHERE? **Oxford, Chislehurst, Sutton**
TICKETS **From £12**
CONTACT **www.bluescaravan.de**

Candyrat Guitar Night UK Tour

14-26 MARCH

US specialist guitarist label present Gareth Pearson, Matthew Santos and Stefano Barone
WHERE? **Nine dates across the country**
TICKETS **From £10**
CONTACT **www.candyrat.com**

Top Secret Blues Festival

4-6 APRIL

Ian Siegal (all three days), Connie Lush, Jon Amor...
WHERE? **Scarborough Blues Club, Cask Inn, Scarborough YO11 2LQ**
TICKETS **£60 for a weekend ticket or call 07956 925 925 for day ticket prices**
CONTACT **www.scarboroughbluesclub.co.uk**

The Great Escape

8-10 MAY

Over 400 bands playing in 35 venues over three days all accessible with one wristband. Dubbed the British answer to Austin's SXSW
WHERE? **Venues across Brighton**
TICKETS **Three day wristband from £54.50**
CONTACT **http://mamacolive.com/thegreatescape**

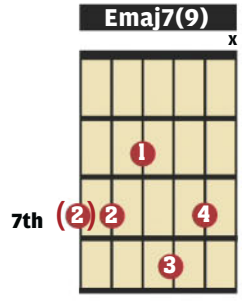
Acoustic Festival Of Great Britain

30 MAY – 1 JUNE

Fairport Convention, Steve Harley, Rodney Branigan, BabaJack, Marcus Bonfanti, the Animals
WHERE? **Uttoxeter Racecourse, Wood Lane, Staffordshire, ST14 8BD**
TICKETS **Weekend £95, £20 more for camping**
CONTACT **www.acousticfestival.co.uk**

The Lost Chord

This chord is perfect for a little bit of late evening bluffer's boss nova (just think in the style of *Girl From Ipanema*). Throw in the alternating bassline on the low E and it may even sound like you know what you're doing.



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Album reviews

Jack Bruce
SILVER RAILS
Esoteric/Antenna

Given Bruce's diverse output, you never know quite what to expect from the British bass boss. Many yearn for more magic of the Cream variety and although this, his first solo record in 10 years, isn't quite that, it could still be the work we've been waiting for. It's resolutely a rock record, with dark avant garde touches, and each track contains emotive, hook-laden reminders that here lurks a true rock god.

Steve Dawson
RATTLESNAKE CAGE
Black Hen Music

Just one man alone in a room with a vintage tube microphone, six- and 12-string acoustics, a National Tricone, a Weissenborn and some jaw-dropping fingerstyle moves. It's all instrumental and, in the John Fahey or Rev Gary Davis tradition, you get the knocks, rattles and fret noise as part of the bare-bones package. Primitive in conception but completely engrossing in its spellbinding delivery.

Joe Louis Walker
HORNET'S NEST
Alligator

Walker shows just how far his prodigious talents stretch on his latest long player. He may return constantly to his brand of ferocious blues but in between he throws down frantic rock'n'roll (*Don't Let Go*), deep soul (*Soul City*), slick classic rock (*Not In Kansas Anymore*) and some polished AOR (*Ride On, Baby*). Through it all his stabbing licks stay fresh, creative and full of energetic zeal. Eye-opening.

Robbie McIntosh
TURN UP FOR THE BOOKS
Self released

As esteemed sideman for the likes of John Mayer, Paul McCartney and the Pretenders, McIntosh's guitar skills have always been of high renown so the only surprise here is the quality of his songs, which, to our ears, often surpasses that of some of his former employers. Aside from astute blues and folk frettery, shrewd melodic moves and an inventive dry wit combine to create an infectious work that's very easy to love.

Crimson ProjeKCt
LIVE IN TOKYO
Century Media

Experimental, futuristic noise-nik antics from a group of peerless musicians who are more or less the current line-up of King Crimson – Adrian Belew (vocal/guitar), Tony Levin (stick), Pat Mastelotto (drums) – without Robert Fripp, plus a few ringers. Most material here comes from the fertile periods of 1994's *Thrak* and 1981's *Discipline*. Be warned, the effect of these wild flights of fancy is a tad unhinging, yet oddly compulsive.

Adrian Nation
LIVE AT CROSSROADS
Laburnum Bridge

An absorbing live solo acoustic set from a superior fingerstyle troubadour who remains under most radars despite releasing two fine albums of self-penned tunes. His own songs are a little overshadowed by a rousing cover of Richard Thompson's sublime *Vincent Black Lightning*, but there's no shame in that, and Nation's strong, strident vocals throughout this show are a perfect match for his mesmerising chops.

Robert Cray
IN MY SOUL
Provogue

Cray's blues have always been of a cool, soulful bent but this album of Stax and Chess-inspired compositions brings that aspect into even keener focus. Cray's vocals are poignant, gentle and sincere, and the overall feel is so hypnotic that you feel bathed in a warm, soothing glow, while economical bursts of crisp, bittersweet finely-honed guitar intensify the experience. Utterly seductive.

Vandenberg's Moonkings
VANDENBERG'S MOONKINGS
Provogue

Dutch guitar rocker Adrian Vandenberg earned his keep as Whitesnake's sideman for a lengthy stint in the '80s yet the mood here, on his first record in 10 years, is pure, joyous, microphone-swinging '70s classic rock. Rifftastic rockers like *Line Of Fire*, *Lust And Lies* and *Nothing Touches* scorch the soul, and when the tempo does dip into big-hair power balladry, it's all very much done in earnest.

John Wesley
DISCONNECT
InsideOutMusic

Wesley has prog pedigree, as he's played guitar with Porcupine Tree for nine years and backed the globetrotting of Marillion's ex-frontman Fish. Pink Floyd, Nine Inch Nails and Radiohead are all pointers, with soaring, intricate solos a stirring speciality. There's a menacing dystopian feel to some of the grinding riffage but also introspective musing to melodic passages. Abrasive, yet captivating.

SNAP JUDGEMENTS

Laurence Jones
TEMPTATION
Ruf
Brit blues boy wonder proving his debut *Thunder In the Sky* was no fluke. Expect ravaging wig-outs aplenty, but some tunes get their hooks in too

Jamie Williams & The Roots Collective
DUG DEEP, FOUND STEEL
Ashwill
Hummable garagey roots-rock featuring potent lead excursions, Dylan-esque vocals and jaunty, off-kilter appeal

Hard Working Americans
HARD WORKING AMERICANS
Melvin
US collective fronted by Todd Snider that stomp through Americana covers with some genuine vim and vigour

Brothers Groove
PLAY THE GAME
Shabby Toad
Loose, smooth, funky blues from a Midlands quartet who clearly do know a thing or two about groove, not to mention some smart, spacious fretwork

Magnum
ESCAPE FROM THE SHADOW GARDEN
Steamhammer/SPV
Epic, superior melodic stadium AOR – think Journey or Scorpions – honed and performed by our own home-grown masters of the form

Stanley Brinks & the Wave Pictures
GIN
Fika
Ex-Herman Dune man backed by guitar-driven indie heroes TWP live in the studio resulting in genial, deliciously vampy poetic whimsy

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Join us for a feast of colour and a large amount of noise as we trawl the aisles of the NAMM show in search of all that's new in guitars, amps, and effects

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Marshall
JVM
Marshall

GRETSCH
Custom Shop
U.S.A.
10th ANNIVERSARY
2014

TRAD
ANAH

201
DEAD

BURN
RATE

Left, the SG Special; right, the SG Futura. Main picture: Les Paul Standard Plus with ocean water finish

GIBSON

Lester's Army

The NAMM show is perhaps the industry's grandest occasion and Gibson decided there was no better place to unveil its totally revamped 2014 USA Les Paul range. Showing a complete lack of any superstition, Gibson have settled on a spread of 13 models. Pictured below is the top end Quilt Top on the left running right through to the budget Melody Maker on the right, with all guitars in between placed in order of expense.

The Quilt Top and Standard Plus are essentially Standards with the coil-tapped Burstbucker Pro pickups plus plusher maple tops – although they don't have the Min-Etune automatic tuning system that comes with the Standard. The Peace riffs on a '60s flower power theme; it packs '61 humbuckers and comes with a hemp-covered case complete with a tie-dyed interior. The Traditional is the only guitar here without any weight relief chambers and it comes with '59 humbuckers and a chunkier neck. The Signature and Classic both dip back into coil splitting and get '57-style pickups with a 15dB boost feature, although the Classic has a hotter unit in the bridge and a slimmer neck while the Signature gets the Min-Etune and a 'rounded' '50s neck. The Studio Pro then takes after the Classic but has no boost, and this is where we lose the binding too.

Because of its boostable P-90H Sidewinder at the neck the Futura could claim to be the one real innovation in the range. There's a coil-tapped Burstbucker 3 in the bridge while Min-Etune is back again too. The last of the coil taps appear on the Studio, while the LPM and LPJ both strip things down as far as Gibson are prepared to go on a Lester – the LPM has Min-Etune, the LPJ doesn't. Last of all, the P90-equipped Melody Maker will be the cheapest Gibson LP you can buy.

The SG revamp follows the format but with only five models – the SGJ (£469), SGM (£599), SG Special (£699 – with twin high-output humbuckers), Futura (£799) and Standard (£1099). For something completely different, there was a real buzz around the Skunk Baxter non-reverse Firebird (pictured left). The three ultra-hot alnico 5 coil-tapped mini humbuckers, each with off/on switches, and talk of 'advanced electronics' only added to the intrigue.

EPIPHONE

The Min-Etune system debuted on Gibson guitars last year but now EPIPHONE are in on the robotic self-tuning act. The sub-£500 Classic T Les Paul now comes with the system as standard, and although it's still hardly in a beginners' price bracket it surely won't be long before these devices are available on just about anything. The cutest guitar at The Epiphone booth was without doubt the hollowbody Casino Coupe, a shrunken Casino that has a tighter tone than its larger brethen but retains all that airy, Beatles-esque vintage character.

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PRS

Stevesonsville Rockets

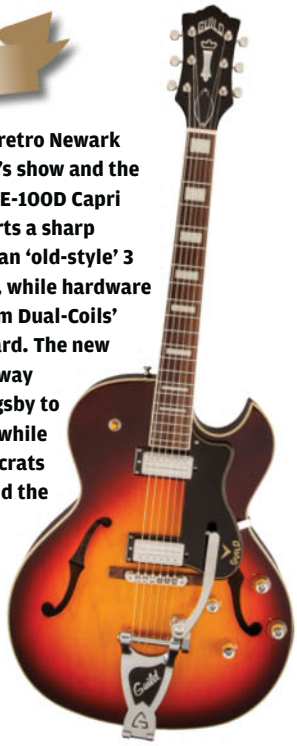
Left, the SE Marty Friedman; right, the SE Floyd Custom 24

Midway through last year **PRS** rolled out its new S-2 range and the sleek coil-tapped S-2 Custom 22 (above) and S-2 Singlecut are the very latest offerings (Custom 24, Starla and Mira models complete the line). The S stands for 'Stevensville', the location of PRS's American Maryland factory, and the idea is to provide US-built guitars that sit at a price between the Korean SE line and the US flagship models. The most notable differences in the S2's makeup are that unlike standard PRS models the maple tops are not carved but have a bevel around the edge, while the hardware is made in Korea. This means that both the new S2s come in at £1499 and build quality is of the highest order. Also new from the top of the range was the Floyd Custom 24 (£3114) with extra hot humbuckers and whammy potential for the hard rockin' fraternity. The Korean factory has been busy too with a new SE Marty Friedman signature (£714), in black and pictured above, and an SE version of the Floyd Custom 24 (£910) for those with shallower pockets who also wish to whammy.

CHARVEL

CHARVEL's niche within the Fender stand housed some tasty new signature models, with the Guthrie Govan above (£3022) being the chief eye-catcher. Govan is renowned for his meticulous attention to detail and Charvel reckon this model could be the ultimate player. There's a choice of a birdseye or flame-maple top on a San Dimas body (usually alder) while the impossibly smooth 'caramelized' neck and 24-fret fingerboard are flamed maple too. An old-school Floyd Rose bridge/tremolo unit serves – which means no locking nut – and the pickups are 'highly transparent' HSH Custom Shop jobs. Also on show was the Jake E Lee signature (£3526, pictured above right) with an unusual reverse-slanting DiMarzio neck/middle single coils backed by a DiMarzio bridge humbucker on a So-Cal ash body with a rosewood fingerboard.

GUILD



GUILD first floated its retro Newark Street line at last year's show and the latest addition is the CE-100D Capri archtop (£994). It sports a sharp florentine cutaway on an 'old-style' 3 1/8" deep hollow body, while hardware includes twin 'Anti-Hum Dual-Coils' and a Bigsby as standard. The new Starfire V double-cutaway thinline just adds a Bigsby to the existing IV model, while two limited-run Aristocrats – the goldtop M-75G and the highly-appointed and Dual-Coil-loaded GSR M-75 – supply extra bling to an already enticing line-up.

DANELECTRO

DANELECTRO discovered a batch of 15-year old alnico lipstick pickups in a warehouse and found they sound warmer and sweeter with a slightly hotter output than the current crop. They've been fitted to these 59 DC 'Modified Spec' guitars (£489) which offer a genuine Jimmy Page vibe with dual concentric controls and a fully-adjustable and intonatable raised-tail Badass-style bridge to bring home the Led Zep styling.

ESP

As ever there was a massive slew of fresh **ESP** and **LTD** models with a dizzying array of artist signatures (a James Hetfield update and new Alex Skolnick to name a couple) and crazy custom-carved bodies stealing the limelight. The big news is that to save confusion the second-tier Japanese-made lines, including LTD Elite and ESP Standard, are now all branded E-II (which sits just under ESP Original in the pecking order). New for this range is the versatile ST-2 pictured with Floyd Rose and tappable DiMarzios. On the other side of the Pacific, the top-end USA Custom series launched too.

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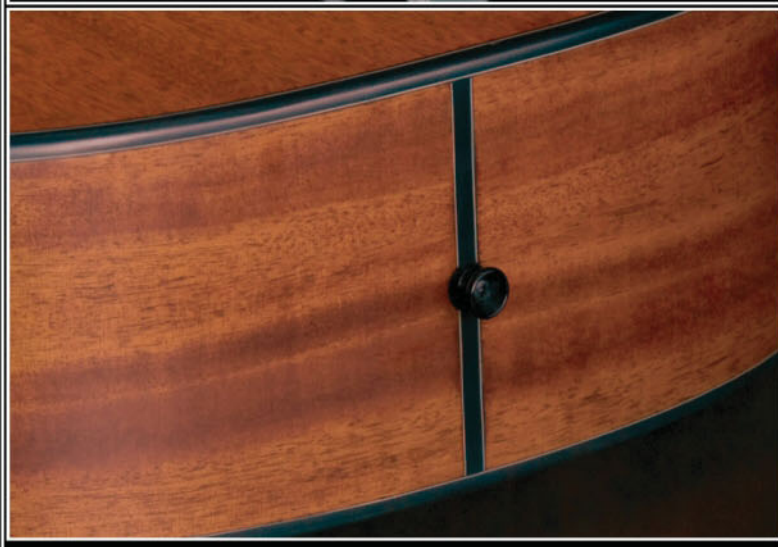
LAG GUITARS



IT'S ALL ABOUT DETAILS

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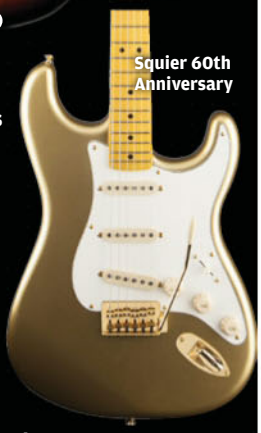
60th Anniversary Strats (l-r): Vintage 1954, Standard and Classic Player

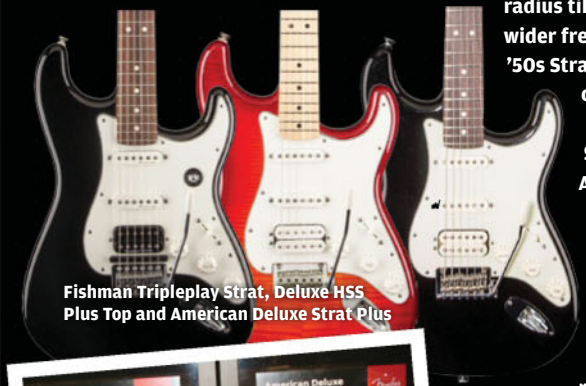
FENDER

Diamonds Are Forever

This year one of the granddaddies of the electric guitar qualifies for a freedom pass. **FENDER** are celebrating the Stratocaster's 60th year with new models that represent the past, present and future of the instrument. The limited-edition 60th Anniversary American Vintage 1954 Stratocaster (above centre, £2277) is a replica of the first Strats that rolled out of Fullerton. It's part of the high-end American Vintage line, and even details like the original string tree, wide-skirt knobs and patent pending saddles are all in place. Only 1954 will be made. The American Standard 60th Anniversary Commemorative Stratocaster (above left, £1498) is very much of the present with modern touches like a two-point pivot bridge, a flat radius tilt-adjustable neck, and wider frets. The 60th Anniversary Classic Player '50s Stratocaster (£994) is a special edition of the current Mexican Strat in a Desert Sand nitro finish, plus there's a 60th Anniversary Squier Classic Vibe (£478) in gold sparkle. All have a special embossed neck plate.



Squier 60th Anniversary



Fishman Tripleplay Strat, Deluxe HSS Plus Top and American Deluxe Strat Plus

Looking to the future is the Fishman TriplePlay Strat (from £1057) with a Seymour Duncan Pearly Gates humbucker at the bridge. It can wirelessly transmit to your PC and comes with software that enables you to create a world of sounds, record, edit or even notate as you play.

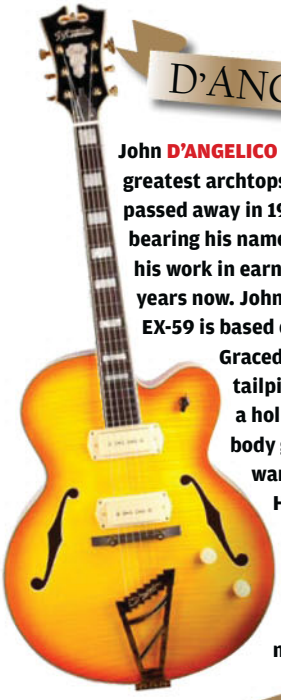
American Deluxe Strat Plus 'personality cards'

Perhaps even more innovative is the American Deluxe Strat Plus (£1774). It's a regular Strat but it also allows you to switch between three 'personality cards' that slot easily into the back of the guitar, changing the pickup and circuit configurations and instantly modding your instrument. It comes as standard with single coils or in an HSS format. For just straight iOS connectivity, the new Mexican Deluxe Strat HSS PlusTop (£814) allows you to plug straight into your computer with no other interface required. Finally from Fender, fresh signatures include the Kurt Cobain Jaguar now with 'New Old Stock' finish instead of Road Worn; Jim Root has had all his sig Tele specs planted on a Jazzmaster body; and the Troy Van Leeuwin signature is basically a pimped Jazzmaster in oxblood red.

FRET-KING

The latest twist on a classic design from **FRET-KING** is the Black Label Exige Standard (£729). An offset body, asymmetric horns and a sloping heel create perfect balance – often a gripe about the guitar the Exige is clearly based on. The WVC double-coil high output pickups are calibrated for hi-gain rock, metal and blues crunch but can handle just about anything else as the Vari-coil system allows you to roll the double coils gradually down to singles for a whole palette of new tones. Wood is all korina except for the rosewood board.

D'ANGELICO



John **D'ANGELICO** built some of the greatest archtops ever made. Sadly he passed away in 1964 but the company bearing his name has been recreating his work in earnest for a couple of years now. John made the guitar this EX-59 is based on back in 1959. Graced by a 'stairstep' tailpiece, the two P90s on a hollow flamed maple body gives bite, twang and warm jazz tones. Handmade Master Built models are available, with the latest being the Style B, but the numbers are limited.

PEERLESS

In 2013 **PEERLESS**, best know for its jazz guitars, unleashed its semi-acoustic rock friendly Retromatic P series to much acclaim. This year sees the Korean company expand with the smaller fully hollow Retromatic 131 (£899). Scalloped bracing and a mahogany soundpost support the arched laminated spruce top, and like much of the P series the 131 sports pickups by London outfit Montys – a humbucker at the bridge and a neck P90. Neck is set maple with a rosewood board, there's a bone nut, and the body is around three inches deep.

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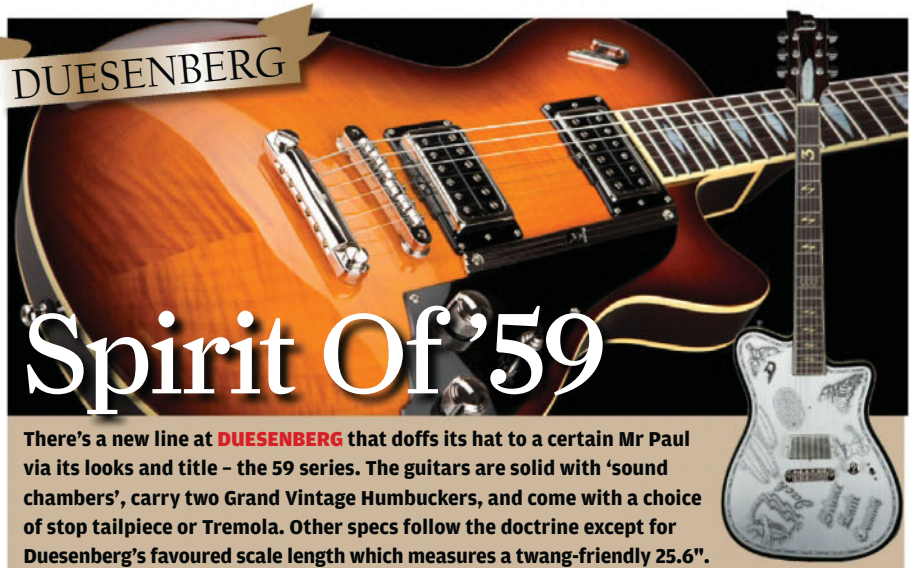
IBANEZ

Shredders Delight

Sorting the **IBANEZ** models that will make a mark on these shores from the dozens of sparkly new machines on show is always tricky. Those in the know assure us that the FR6UC Prestige single cutaway (pictured centre) and RGD7UC 7-string with their UK-made Bareknuckle Aftermath pickups are sure to be a hit. Necks are five-piece, while the 24 jumbo frets sit on a sleek ebony board; pre-order to avoid disappointment. For shredders who crave a fresh RG there's the HSH RG655 Prestige (just under £1000, pictured left) with DiMarzios, a 24-fret maple/walnut neck and of course a locking trem, but the budget two-humbucker fixed-bridge RG421 (£299) may steal its thunder. The lightweight sculpted top S series S5521Q Prestige (around £1500, pictured right) won many hearts. The thin, elegant mahogany/maple body is a stunner and most of the hardware, like the Gibraltar bridge and V7/V8 pickups, was designed specifically for the guitar. Elsewhere the 8-string trend gathers pace, and the Tosin Tabas 8-string signature now comes as the more affordable TAM10 (£899).

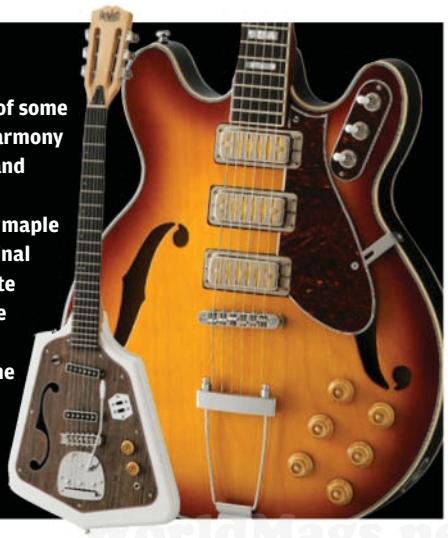
DUESENBERG



Spirit Of '59

There's a new line at **DUESENBERG** that doffs its hat to a certain Mr Paul via its looks and title – the 59 series. The guitars are solid with 'sound chambers', carry two Grand Vintage Humbuckers, and come with a choice of stop tailpiece or Tremola. Other specs follow the doctrine except for Duesenberg's favoured scale length which measures a twang-friendly 25.6". Eye candy came in the form of the Johnny Depp Artist signature (only 52 will be made) which sports repros of Johnny's tattoos and one single-coil voiced for extra warmth and crunch.

EASTWOOD



The **EASTWOOD** booth is virtually a guarantee of some revival grooviness. Perhaps best known as a Harmony model, the H77 also appeared during the '60s and early '70s with Airline and Silvertone on the headstock. It's a semi-hollow with a laminated maple body; the Gold Foil Argyle pickups ape the original DeArmonds and all have period-correct separate tone and volume controls plus individual toggle switches sitting proudly on a plate. The H78 version simply includes a Bigsby. We also get the lovably eccentric Japanese surf stylings of the '67 Domino Californian Rebel, sitting somewhere between a Vox Phantom, an Eko violin guitar and who knows what else...

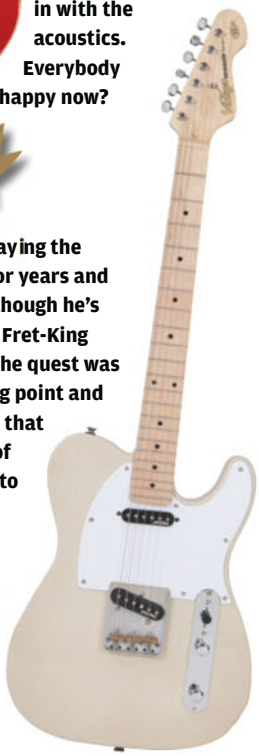
FRAMUS

The smart bodywork of the **FRAMUS** Idolmaker simply demanded attention. The guitar was developed alongside blues shredder Stevie Salas, and one of the three models on offer is his signature. The maple top is slotted into the body, with the top bout and bottom almost seeming to clamp it in place. The standard Idolmaker and the Salas (pictured) have mahogany bodies and necks, ebony fingerboards and Seymour Duncan coil-tapped humbuckers while the Idolmaker Five'R comes with a maple neck, rosewood board, red alder body and three Nordstrand pickups.

GRETSCH

Is it an electric or is it an acoustic? **GRETSCH**'s G5034TFT Rancher (£706) proved controversial amongst the *G&B* team and NAMM go'ers alike. Following the debatable logic that anything with a Fideli'Tron pickup, a fully-operational Bigsby and an arched top (and back) must be an electric, it won a place in this section. Its sibling the G5031FT Rancher does have the Fideli'Tron but no Bigsby and X-bracing instead of an arched top, so it has gone in with the acoustics. Everybody happy now?

VINTAGE



Jerry Donahue has been playing the **VINTAGE** ICON Series V52 for years and still sings its praises even though he's now also besotted with his Fret-King Black Label JD signature. The quest was to take the V52 as a starting point and build a guitar, on a budget, that could produce the myriad of sounds Donahue has come to expect from a single instrument. The V58JD Reissued is the result and Jerry reckons it's 'Amazing!' The guitar can emulate a huge range of solidbody and semi-acoustic tones and yet costs a paltry £399.

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Pictured: Apollo4DC

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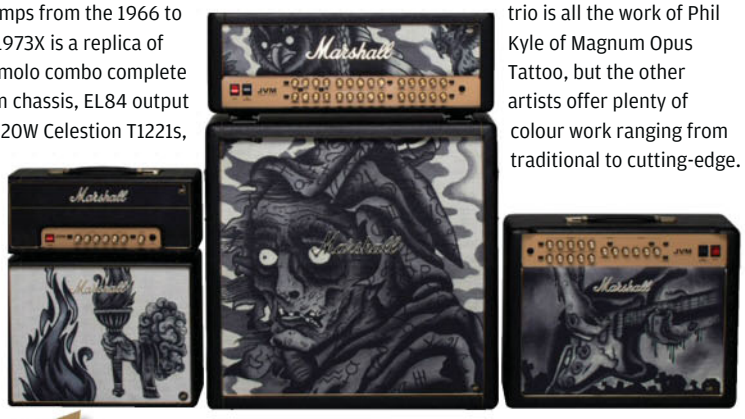
Hand delivery

MARSHALL

For fans of the original Marshall sound, the company unveiled four additions to the desirable Handwired reissue series. Biggest of the bunch is the 30W 2x12" 1962HW, aka the Bluesbreaker combo of 1965, complete with Drake transformers and 25W Greenbacks; then there's the matching 2245THW, the same thing but in pure head form.

The second two amps both pay tribute to the formidable 18W amps from the 1966 to 1968 period; the 1973X is a replica of the 18W 2x12" tremolo combo complete with an aluminium chassis, EL84 output valves and 'aged' 20W Celestion T1221s, and finally the 1958X is exactly the same amplifier but in more compact 2x10" combo form with two 15W Celestion G10F-15 drivers.

Also making quite a statement are the three new Custom Shop Tattoo amps pictured below. The three amps comprise the one-watt JVM1H head with a C110 1x10" cabinet, the 100W JVM410H head with a 1960A angled 4x12" cabinet, and the 50W JVM215C 1x12" combo, but all three have been decorated with inky art from five big names in the UK skin trade, which all adds up to 15 very striking choices. This monochrome trio is all the work of Phil Kyle of Magnum Opus Tattoo, but the other artists offer plenty of colour work ranging from traditional to cutting-edge.



ORANGE

If it's high gain that you seek then we advise that you pay attention to the lairiest ORANGE amps to date, the Dual Dark 50 and Dual Dark 100. These all-valve whoppers have switchable outputs (down to 50/25W on the 50, and 70/50/30W on the 100), EL34 power tubes and differently-voiced channels – the familiar Dark Terror sound on Channel B and an all-new Channel A that travels from clean to crunch to a fresh, more modern metal voicing, together with mega-adaptability thanks to a three-band EQ section.

BLACKSTAR

Looking like Darth Vader's handbag, the new 10W, 20W and 40W ID:Core BLACKSTAR amps give a full stereo sound to make your practice sessions as wide and huge-sounding as possible and come with six basic amp sounds, modulation, delay and reverb, plus USB connectivity for editing, storage and artist tone downloads. Lurking at the back is the HT Club 40 in limited edition red tolex, offering giggability with 2xEL34s and a 12" Celestion.

LINE 6

Something pretty fresh from Line 6 is the AMPLIFi, a guitar combo which comes in two versions, 75W and 150W, both with a Bluetooth speaker system. It has no less than five speakers running in stereo and it links to your mobile device so that you can control everything remotely, use it as a hi-fi to play along to tracks, share sounds with other users, and store unlimited presets.

TWO-ROCK

TWO-ROCK's 15th anniversary is being celebrated with the Crystal. It's all about pure, simple valve tone with no bells and whistles, yet created with pedals in mind, with audiophile-style knobs to echo the hi-fi theme. All versions are single channel and come with spring reverb, reverb send and return, a passive FX loop, and nothing more. Choose between 22W, 40W, 50W or 100W heads and 22W or 40W combos.

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FENDER

FENDER rolled out some updates of well-known classics at NAMM 2014. Tweedy and handsome, the '57 Deluxe Head echoes the arguably never-beaten sound of the mid-sized late-'50s combo, while the '65 Deluxe Reverb Head resurrects the '60s complete with reverb, tremolo and 22W of power. And that red... erm.. thing? Well, the Pawnshop series has expanded with the addition of the Vaporizer, a Jetsons-styled all-valve recording/rehearsal 2xEL84 reverb combo with 12 watts, dead simple Volume, Tone and Reverb knobs, a useful external speaker out, and a 'Vaporizer' mode which bypasses both Volume and Tone for full-scale fizzy distorto-mayhem. In red, blue or green, it's like a sci-fi cartoon... with teeth.

TONE KING

TONE KING amps are built at the Two-Rock facility in Baltimore, and they're very pleased with the new Majesty amp, their first-ever product with a distinct British flavour. Available in 45W and 15W forms, this all-valve rig comes over like a refined JTM and features the Iron Man attenuator for truly non-master volume feel and sound at lower levels.

SUPRO

Vintage **SUPRO** amps have long been the secret gnarly weapon of alt-minded players from blues to punk. Now there are five – yep, five – new ones, designed by Pigtronix's David Koltai with Bruce Zinky: the S6420, a reissue of the '64 35W 1x15" Thunderbolt; the S6420+, an update of the above with extra power; the 24W 1x12" 1624T Dual Tone; the 1690T Coronado, a 35W 2x10" combo; and finally the S6450R Thunderstorm, much like the S6420+ but with added gain boost and valve reverb.

VOX

The moody all-valve **VOX** Night Train series now has three new members, the G2 family, all with onboard digital reverb. Pokiest of the lot is the NT50H-2G head above – there's also a smaller 15W version – while at the back lurks the first-ever Night Train combo, the 15W NT15C1-G2. Expect a high-gain Girth channel and a more trad Bright channel with Thick mode – and there are matching cabs too.

HAYDEN

More useful new gear from HAYDEN this year. This HX 40 C combo is an all-valve, twin channel 40-watter with EL84 output tubes, a Boost switch on Ch2 and a digital reverb that can be switched between long and short variations of both hall and plate sounds, and the power can be knocked down to 20W if you want to limit the damage a bit. The HX 50 H head is driven by a pair of EL34s and features two fully-EQ-able channels and far more footswitchability together with dual master volumes.

PEAVEY

Modelling has come of age at PEAVEY, who launch the VYPYR Pro with 400 presets and over 100 models of effects, amps and even guitars. It can run four amp models in parallel and in any order, comes with an advanced USB system for home recording, hooks up with the AT-200 guitar to even change tunings, and welcomes the Sanpera Pro footcontroller with its two expression pedals, tap tempo, tuner and looper.

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Cheap Thrills

EHX

If one new **ELECTRO-HARMONIX** pedal wins the 'trending' prize then it's the Soul Food pictured right, a booster/overdrive designed to imitate the voicing of the madly expensive and hard-to-get Klon Centaur and coming in at such a low price that it'll surely make a big mark in the 'Klon klone' world – but there's plenty else besides. Up top we have the Ehxtortion, the company's new, fully-featured flagship JFET overdrive and boost; the Holy Grail Max, essentially a update of the well-known spring/hall reverb pedal with new Plate and Reverse settings and improved controllability; the Glove, a promising-looking Marshall-voiced MOSFET overdrive; and the Satisfaction, a bare-bones fuzzer that tips its knobs to Keef's famous Maestro fuzz-driven early Stones tone.

And there's more, such as the Lumberjack, which comes with a long explanation about linear and logarithmic distortion scales but basically amounts to an overdrive pedal that's super-sensitive to guitar volume and player input, and the East River Drive, a 'natural, transparent' overdrive that uses a JRC4558 chip and thus invites comparisons with the Tube Screamer. Good work all round, EHX.

BOSS

New gear both complex and simple from BOSS, who unveiled the ME-80 multi-FX with pleasingly old-school knob controls. It's got eight multifunction footswitches, an expression pedal, amp sims taken from the GT-100 and of course zillions of effects: we like it. For stompers, meanwhile, there were two 'special editions' of familiar pedals in sparkly finishes, the DS-1X distortion and the OD-1X overdrive. They're digital, not analogue like the oldies, but come with added tone controls.

KORG

The KORG Pandora Stomp crams 158 types of effect – up to seven usable at the same time – into a diecast box and lobs in a tuner and rhythm patterns, too. Use it alone as the tiniest multi-FX you can think of, or chuck it on your pedalboard as a tuner with all those added sounds as a bonus.

IBANEZ

The useful upper mid-hump of the Tube Screamer is as popular as ever and IBANEZ has just released the TS808DX, a 2-in-1 box with a JRC4558D TS on one side and a 20dB boost on the other. Use them alone or together – and you can even switch the order.

WAY HUGE

WAY HUGE is kicking out the jams with the Havalina Germanium Fuzz, a three-transistor design that (we're guessing) may take the MkIII/IV Tone Bender as its starting point, while the Swollen Pickle Dirt Donny Edition packs the established Swollen Pickle fuzz into a smaller package, keeping all the important mind-shredding controls and adding artwork by Metallica/QOTSA artist Dirt Donny.

DUNLOP

The Echoplex of myth and legend wasn't just about tape echo, it also boasted a rather remarkable preamp known as the EP-3, much cloned in recent years. Now DUNLOP has an official version offering up to 11dB of FET-powered boost. Also new is the DVP1XL volume/ expression pedal.

THE ROBERT CRAY BAND

IN MY SOUL

IN STORES MARCH 31th

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10/05/14	Cambridge, UK, Corn Exchange
11/05/14	Norwich, UK, Theatre Royal
13/05/14	Tunbridge Wells, UK, Assembly Hall Theatre
14/05/14	Cardiff, UK, St Davids Hall
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T-REX

All Aboard

The compelling-looking SoulMate from T-REX is a multi-FX that combines five T-Rex pedals – the Møller, the Mudhoney, the Replica/Reptile and the Room Mate. It also has a tuner, a loop for outboard stuff, boasts an analog dry signal, and a switching system that activates any combination with one toe dab. We also saw the Replay Box, a three-second delay with tap tempo; the Creamer, a spring/room/hall reverb with a tone control for the wet signal; and the Vulture, a distortion with a wide range of gain and Low and Fat boost knobs.

SONUUS

SONUUS from the UK have just brought out the all-analog Voluum pedal. It's got 28 different volume curves to choose from, plus an onboard noise gate, compressor, tremolo and limiter, all of which can be used in any combination. It's also MIDI-ready and USB-equipped. Neat!

RAT

The latest in the long-running RAT distortion pedal line is the Fat Rat, a US-built stomper that gives you the choice between running the original-style circuitry and a MOSFET alternative for a 'smoother, more amp-like' tone. It's also got a socketed op-amp for chip swaps and improved bass response.

DAWNER PRINCE

All the way from Croatia, DAWNER PRINCE have already made a name for themselves with the Starla tap-tempo tremolo, and here are two new items: the Red Rox distortion, which packs an eyebrow-lifting amount of gain with Tone and Contour knobs, and the Diktator, a two-channel clean boost and overdrive/distortion.

BOGNER

Those BOGNER folk, purveyors of filth via the Ecstasy Blue, Red and Uberschall pedals plus the 'transformer' pedals designed with console guru Rupert Neve, have launched the Zero, a dual buffer boost and amp splitter, and the Lyndhurst compressor. There's also a guitar DI pedal appropriately named the Guitar Amp DI.

TC ELECTRONIC

Last year's Ditto micro-looper was a hit, and now the TC ELECTRONIC Ditto X2 expands on it with a new interface that allows a dedicated stop/clear control plus an FX switch for reverse and half-speed effects – and you can import and export loops as well.

MXR

The Micro Amp of the 1970s was a truly excellent one-knob boost, and now it's back in the form of the MXR Micro Amp+ with an added two-band EQ. Also fresh from the company is the La Machine, a 'thick, shaggy retro fuzz' for hard rock to garage rock; the Phase 99, essentially two Phase 90s in a single box; and the Uni-Vibe, a very tasty-looking compact chorus/vibrato pedal with Level, Speed and Depth knobs for that '60s Leslie-like swoosh.

RANDALL

RANDALL means business with a quartet of businesslike stompboxes. The Facepunch is a true bypass overdrive with Smooth, Punch and Freq controls; the RGOD is a super-gainy twin-channel FET preamp with full Bass, Middle, Treble and Presence control; the MOR is a 'clean, aggressive' one-knob booster, and the RF8 is an eight-button MIDI footswitch.

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MARTIN

Wood'n'Heart

Unsurprisingly, the Martin Guitars booth was a cornucopia of acoustic delights. The OM-ECHF Navy Blues (top left) is the third in a series of collaborations with Eric Clapton and Hiroshi Fujiwara. This OM edition incorporates the longer 25.4" scale for added string tension and tonal projection. The neck and body are lacquered and polished in a striking dark navy; the back and sides are East Indian rosewood, and the soundboard is European spruce. The 000RSGT (middle) is an affordable 14-fret Road Series guitar with a polished gloss Sitka spruce top, solid sapele back and sides and a solid sipo neck. The way the 000RSGT emulates the appearance, integrity and tone of the Martin Style 18 Auditorium model will no doubt please retro fans, but the Fishman Sonitone electronics and the USB port ensures it's an instrument with 21st century sensibilities. The 000-28K Authentic 1921 (above right) is based upon a pristine 1921 000-28K from the Martin Museum collection; this slot-head 12-fret is a completely faithful recreation of the original, featuring flamed Hawaiian koa top, back and sides, hide glue construction, and a hand-shaped neck without a truss rod. The CS-00S-14 (inset left) is a Style 42 12-fret slotted head fingerstyle model crafted with Honduras rosewood back and sides for resonant tone, a torrefied (temperature aged) Swiss spruce top, and a lightweight non-adjustable carbon fibre neck reinforcement. Featuring unobtrusive plug-and-play Fishman Aura VT electronics, only 114 of these exclusive instruments will be available around the world.

YAMAHA

The L Series from YAMAHA has been updated, with the new LL16D (pictured) featuring a High Comfort neck profile and solid rosewood back and sides as well as a solid Engelmann spruce top treated with Yamaha's Acoustic Resonance Enhancement process. For those after a cutaway electro-acoustic dreadnought, there's the A1FM with its winning combo of sitka spruce top and flamed maple back and sides, System 66 preamp and SRT pickup.

VINTAGE

VINTAGE have a cute new collaboration with acoustic maestro Paul Brett that is geared to take on the travel guitar market. The Viator – the name means 'traveller' in Latin – is a 12-fret parlour featuring a solid sitka spruce top, sapele back and sides and customised scalloped X bracing to withstand all the wandering. No worries on the volume front, either... it's really remarkably loud for such a tiny guitar.

GRETSCH

Home On The Ranch

Fans of the Rancher series from Gretsch will think they've died and gone to acoustic heaven as a number of new 2014 models were unveiled. Among the ones that took our fancy was the G5031FT (above left). Fitted with a Fideli'Tron pickup for plugged-in tones, this 16-fret sunburst dreadnought has a bound solid spruce top with scalloped X bracing, mahogany sides and bound arched back. We also were taken with the charms of the white G5022CWFE Falcon Jumbo, with Fishman electronics and loadsa sparkle...

EKO

2014 is an important year for EKO as it will begin product of guitars in Italy for the first since its rebirth. The first Italian-made acoustic is the Profumosa with appointments like a solid Valcanale Italian spruce top, ebony fingerboard, bone nut and saddle plus inhouse carbon-fibre tuners. More likely to be seen on these shores are the Far East-built all-mahogany Duo series and the spruce-topped Tri (Tri Mini pictured). Tops are solid on both. Body shapes are dread, 018 and travel-friendly Mini, with the first two both having cutaway options.

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TAYLOR

Sound Sense

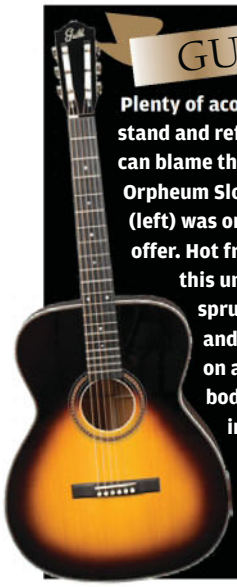
Bob Taylor was celebrating four decades of designing and building guitars, and **TAYLOR** were certainly in the mood to party. Among the choice instruments on display was a completely revamped 800 Series. Among the modifications and enhancements displayed on the 814CE (above left) and 816CE (above right) were a unique new bracing style and Taylor's new Expression System 2 pickup, while the T5 range didn't get ignored with the unveiling of the compact T5Z (right).

GIBSON

Three's Company

GIBSON released three new acoustic models into a grateful world. The J-15 (pictured left) features a sitka spruce top, walnut back'n'sides, maple neck, LR Baggs Element preamp and mini Grover tuners. The J-29 (middle) sports rosewood back and sides, mahogany neck and Gibson's 1930s X braced top. If you're looking for something that looks a bit more ostentatious, but still fine-sounding, check out the square-shouldered charms of the Hummingbird Quilt dreadnought with its trademark pickguard motif.

GUILD



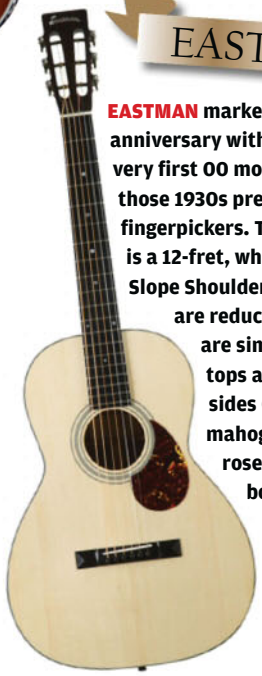
Plenty of acoustic lovers went to the **GUILD** stand and refused to come out... and who can blame them when you consider that the Orpheum Slotted Headstock Orchestra (left) was one of many fine new guitars on offer. Hot from the Guild Custom Shop, this unusual model features a red spruce top, solid mahogany back and sides and an ebony fretboard on a maple neck with a 12-fret body join. Other highlights included the AF-50CE (right), a jumbo cutaway electro-acoustic with a bolt-on mahogany neck and an Indian rosewood fingerboard.

EPIPHONE

It was inevitable. After the launch of the Gibson solidbody self-tuning Min-Etune guitars last year it was only a matter of time before the device found its way onto an acoustic; the only surprise is that **EPIPHONE** got there first. The FT-350SCE Min-Etune might even be the first in the world, but surely robotic tuning capabilities will be rife very soon. It's a fairly standard sub-£500 electro-acoustic otherwise with a solid top, mahogany back and sides and Shadow electrics.

EASTMAN

EASTMAN marked its 10th anniversary with the release of its very first 00 models inspired by those 1930s pre-war parlour fingerpickers. The E1000 (pictured) is a 12-fret, while the E2000SS Slope Shoulder is a 14-fret. Both are reduced scale and specs are similar with spruce tops and solid back and sides (E1000 has mahogany, E2000 gets rosewood), ebony boards, mahogany necks, bone nuts and saddles plus Ping open gear tuners.



CRAFTER

This is the new, high-end 42nd Anniversary model from **CRAFTER**, known as the Dragon Rose, with an abalone dragon fingerboard motif, a 'ring of fire' soundhole inlay, solid rosewood back and sides, and an Engelmann spruce top. They've also got a new cutaway orchestra guitar, the TE-9 – all-maple, including the top – and an appealing slotted-headstock 12-fretter in a nice '30s style sunburst called the PLT-8.

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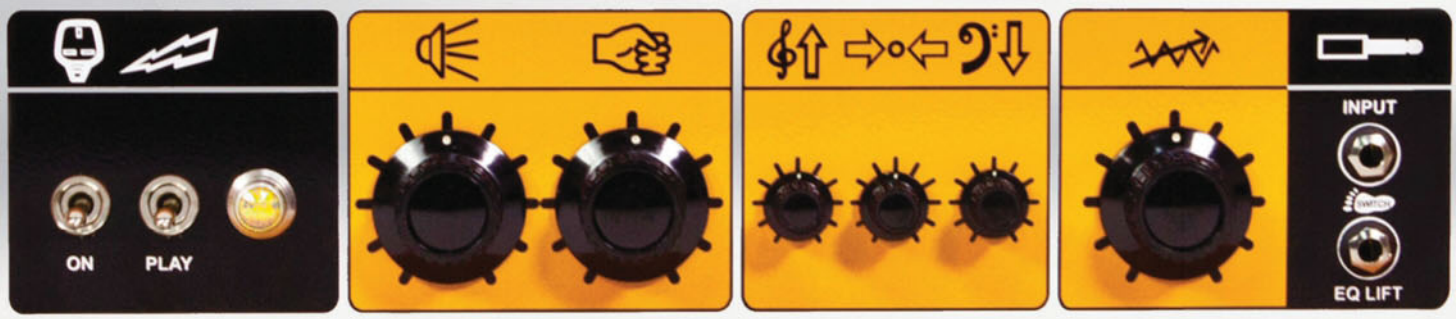

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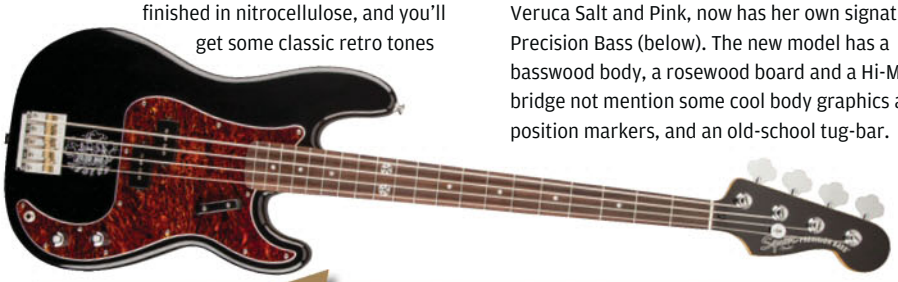
FENDER

Ready To Rumble

Fender's revamped Rumble series amps – going from 15W to 500W – are lighter and louder than ever. A newly-developed footswitchable overdrive circuit and three-button voicing palette promises to deliver ideal gigging tones. Additional upgrades include Eminence drivers and premium HF compression tweeters. Other features include classic Fender styling and soft-touch radio knobs.

Among the many other Fender bass highlights at NAMM 2014 was the 1964 Heavy Relic Precision Bass (above left). It has an alder body and a C-shaped quartersawn maple neck, both finished in nitrocellulose, and you'll get some classic retro tones using the vintage split single-coil Precision bass pickup. Another Custom Shop beauty that caught our eye was the 2014 Proto Precision Bass (above right) with its maple fretboard, medium jumbo frets and TV Jones Thunderblade pickup with vintage Precision wiring. On the Squier front, Eva Gardner, whose credits include Mars Volta, Veruca Salt and Pink, now has her own signature Precision Bass (below). The new model has a basswood body, a rosewood board and a Hi-Mass bridge not mention some cool body graphics and position markers, and an old-school tug-bar.



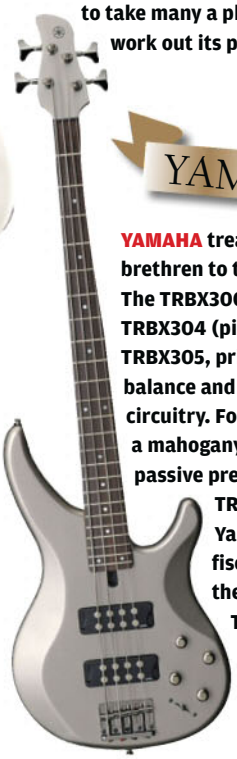
ASHDOWN

ASHDOWN were out in full force at NAMM 2014. Among the fine bass amp artillery was the PiBass 240W head, designed to the specifications of top bassist Wojetk Pilichowski. This digital micro amp packs small but is designed for all your gigging needs. And that wasn't end of the releases, with the new Five 15 Big Boy amp being one of the additions to Ashdown's Access All Areas range. The new MAG Rootmaster range of affordable lightweight models contain user-friendly features including a Line Mix rotary control and FS-2 socket as well as more power than their MAG predecessors.

DIGITECH

Bass-lovin' folk came from far and wide to check out DIGITECH's revamped version of the Bass Whammy. Apart from that trademark Whammy effect and all those classic settings, those who experience the 2014 version will be able to take advantage of two different tracking modes: Classic and Chord (polyphonic). With True Bypass, MIDI input for control, as well as a total of 21 different pitch settings, it's going to take many a pleasurable hour to work out its possibilities.

YAMAHA



YAMAHA treated the world's bass brethren to the new TRBX models. The TRBX300 series, including the TRBX304 (pictured) and five-string TRBX305, pride themselves on their balance and Performance EQ active circuitry. For those that appreciate a mahogany build and an active/passive preamp there's the new TRBX500 series, and Yamaha are claiming a fiscal breakthrough with the ultra-affordable TRBX175, an alder body/maple-neck bass that sports a split-coil/single-coil pickup duo.

ORANGE

Making its debut out in California was ORANGE's OB1-K head. You can make your own *Star Wars* gags up yourselves, as there's plenty of bass-bustin' tech info to be delivered. For a start, it's Orange's first-ever rack-mountable amp (with optional sleeve mounting available), and this 1000W solid-state unit can bi-amp to your heart's content, splitting the signal into two separate yet combinable paths: one clean, the other with two stages of controllable gain.

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GIBSON

Hog Heaven

It was SG basses ahoy at GIBSON, with the 2014 SG Special Bass catching many an admiring glance – and no wonder, with a T-Bird Plus neck pickup and a T-Bird Mini pickup fitted into a mahogany body, while the mahogany neck features a special Gibson 120th anniversary inlay at the 12th fret. For semi-hollow fans, the same inlay can be had on the 2014 Midtown Signature basses, along with a chambered mahogany body with maple top that follows the Les Paul Signature Bass asymmetrical double-cutaway style.

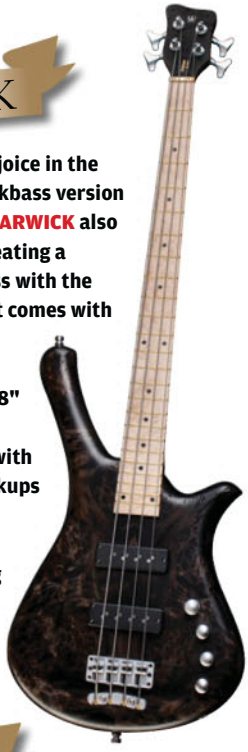
IBANEZ

IBANEZ unveiled a veritable plethora of new bass models at the show. Among the low-end lovelies worthy of attention was the ATK200TP (pictured left); available in both four-string and five-string versions, this one has a CAP double humbucker in the bridge that gives you three distinct voicings at the flick of a switch. For bassists on more of a budget, the GSR200SM-CNB (centre) with its Phat II EQ is a fine way to get some affordable Ibanez bass tones... and we were very impressed with the fast neck of the SR1800E (right).

PEAVEY

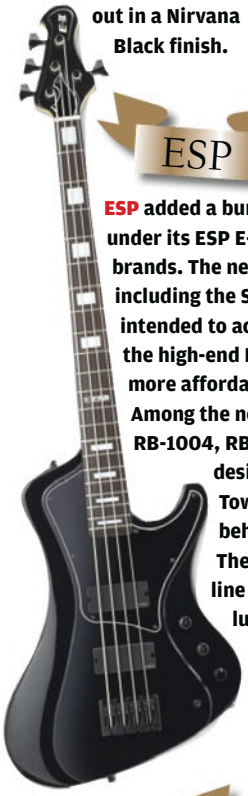
Mini was the bass watchword over at PEAVEY this year. The MiniMega 1000W head offers a Gain control with Crunch button, a four-band EQ with Punch and Bright Switches and built-in Kosmos Bass Enhancement with Psycho-Acoustic and Sub controls, and is designed to contain everything necessary for a bass player in one small package. Its compatriot the 400W MiniMax is even more compact, and features a Pre-Gain control with TransTube gain boost, DDT speaker protection, and active and passive inputs.

WARWICK



Bootsy Collins fans will rejoice in the news of an affordable Rockbass version of his Space Bass, while WARWICK also kept up its tradition of creating a yearly Limited Edition bass with the new Fortress (pictured). It comes with a wenge neck, a birdseye maple fingerboard and a swamp ash body with a 3/8" birdseye poplar top. The Fortress LTD is equipped with Nordstrand 'Fat Strat' pickups and active MEC three-way electronics. Both the four-string and five-string versions are decked out in a Nirvana Black finish.

ESP



ESP added a bunch of new models under its ESP E-II, LTD and Original brands. The new ESP EII-Series, including the Stream (pictured), is intended to act as a bridge between the high-end ESP models and the more affordable LTD colleagues. Among the new LTD basses are the RB-1004, RB-1005 and RB-1006, designed with the help of Tower of Power's bass behemoth Rocco Prestia. The new ESP Original line of basses includes a lush maple and walnut Stream model in two-tone sunburst.

GUILD

At the GUILD stand there were plenty of bass fans checking out the new M-85 range. The Guild GSR M-85 II (pictured) is a limited edition beauty; it has a fully hollow body with mahogany back and sides and a laminated spruce arched top supported with parallel tone bar bracing. Its semi-hollow Guild Newark St Collection M-85 associate may have one less pickup than the GSR, but those dual finger-rests will appeal to many – and the soft U-profile neck makes it a real treat to play.

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Totally STONED

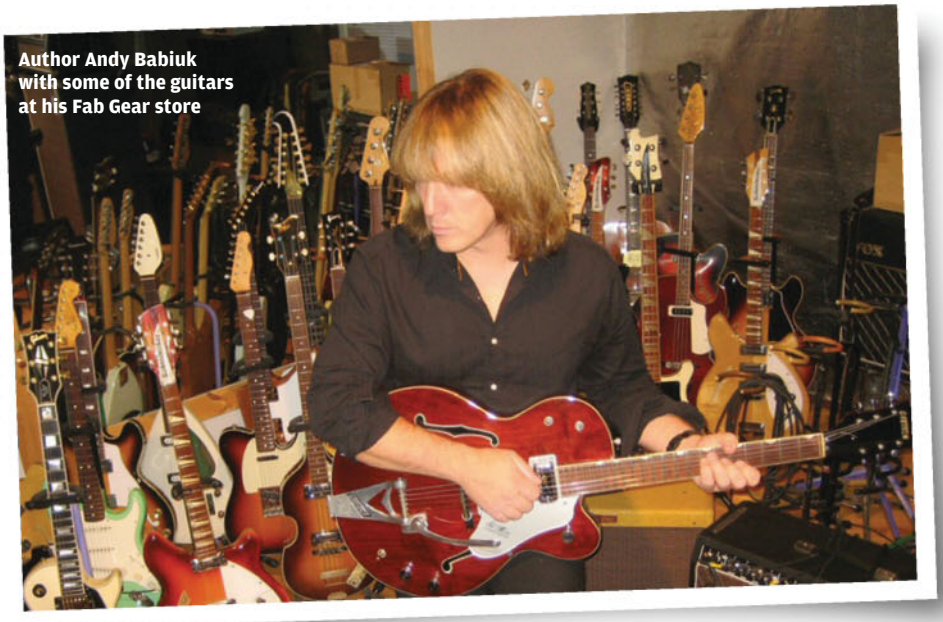
Fifty-two years and thousands of guitars later, the Rolling Stones' gear has finally been documented. Michael Stephens talks to *Rolling Stones Gear* author Andy Babiuk about some key guitars in his mammoth book about the guitars of 'the world's greatest rock'n'roll band'...

You think you're a guitar geek? Meet Andy Babiuk. He's the author of the fabled book, *Beatles Gear*. In his 'day job' he runs Andy Babiuk's Fab Gear, his boutique guitar store in Rochester, New York. But for the last nine years, he's also been working on his new book, *Rolling Stones Gear.*

Given that the Stones are now 52 years old as a band, you can imagine how many guitars Keith and company have played over live shows and recordings. If any three Stones guitarists/bassists changed strings each week on their numerous guitars, we're already talking two million strings... probably way more. But that hasn't stopped Babiuk trying to document in detail all of the band's significant guitars. *Rolling Stones Gear,* full of exclusive detail and photos, boasts a huge 672 pages and goes deep on Fenders, Voxes, Gibsons, Music Mans, Travis Beans, Dan Armstrongs... plus the amps and Charlie Watts' drums. It's gear-nerd nirvana.

'Maybe I'm crazy,' Babiuk laughs. 'But I'd done the *Beatles Gear* book, and I grew up mainly listening to two bands; I have such reverence for both the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. And if you're going to do the Beatles, you might as well do the Stones, right? That was my mentality, but once I got into it, it was so much work. Basically, the Stones' career is a much longer time period...'

Here, Andy Babiuk shares a few stories and images of legendary guitars that appear in *Rolling Stones Gear*.



Author Andy Babiuk with some of the guitars at his Fab Gear store

Brian Jones' Vox MK III 'Teardrop'

In July 1964, Jennings Musical Industries presented Brian Jones with their latest electric guitar creation, the Vox MK III, soon nicknamed the Vox 'Teardrop.' The visually striking six-string was a follow-up to the coffin-shaped Vox Phantom and soon became Jones' trademark guitar in '64 and '65.

The Teardrop was the brainchild of Tom Jennings, who wanted Vox to be recognised as a producer of futuristic guitar shapes, just as Gibson had been with their Flying V and Explorer models. He commissioned his chief design engineer, Mick Bennett, to create a new body design similar to that of a lute. Bennett drew up the blueprints and built the first prototype Vox MK III guitars in 1963.

Andy Babiuk: 'I just love this guitar. Bill Wyman had a Teardrop bass, too. I've played in a band called the Chesterfield Kings for some 30 years, and I always wanted a bass like that. I play guitar, but I'm primarily a bass player. The Italian Voxes are often terrible, and the British-made ones are so hard to find.

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Left, Brian Jones' white '64 Vox MK III Teardrop; right, Bill Wyman's Framus 5/150 'Humbug' bass

'There are only a few really evocative instruments in the guitar world, and when people see a white Vox Teardrop, they think of Brian Jones'

I've actually had a custom-built Teardrop bass made, with an EB-0 pickup in it. It's all because of Brian Jones.

'There are only a few really evocative instruments in the guitar world. And when people see a picture of a white Vox Teardrop, they think of Brian Jones.

'We were very fortunate. The original is now owned by the Hard Rock Museum but they gave us complete access and let us take it apart and photograph it for the book. My good friend Martin Kelly, who did the book *Fender: The Golden Age*, is soon putting out another book about the whole history of Vox guitars and he was really helpful, so I need to give him credit. Martin has even interviewed the guy who built this very guitar.

'The interesting thing is, this Vox is a prototype. If you look closely at the pictures, the bridge is actually a Fender Strat tremolo bridge. On one side, the bridge is cut off where the tremolo bar would normally be screwed in, and the back block had to be shaped-out so it would fit into the guitar. It's a fascinating instrument. Everyone knows of Brian Jones using a Teardrop, but this one, his very own, really is a one-off guitar. It's kind of magical.'

Bill Wyman
Framus 5/150 'Humbug' Bass

This Framus 5/150 Star Bass De Luxe model was nicknamed by Stones bassist Wyman as the 'Humbug' as its wood stripes looked like the then-popular striped English sweets of the same name. The hollowbody 'Humbug' bass was like Bill's first Framus bass, with the same pickup configuration, but with a smaller body and no f-holes. It was first used by Bill Wyman circa 1964.

Andy Babiuk: 'I sat with Bill for a long time and we went through about 350 pictures. Bill was really helpful, and he zoned-in on why I wanted to interview him. He's the Stones' historian, after all. Bill took the time to catalogue stuff, he gave me posters and pictures, let me read first-hand accounts from his diaries. I have to say, his book *Rolling With The Stones* is one of the finest Rolling Stones books ever done. I thought he would be the guy in the Stones who probably knew the most... and he did.

'Bill played a lot of different basses. But the early period with Framus – they were running adverts with Bill back then, so it's another key association to a particular instrument. You only have the think about the songs made with this Framus – *19th Nervous Breakdown*, for example, which has a very cool bassline. Historically, it's a very important instrument.

'Bill stopped using it for a bit, but when the Stones played the Hyde Park show with Mick Taylor in 1969, just after Brian Jones died, ➔

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he chose to use that bass again. I thought it was of some significance so I asked him: you'd been playing Fender Mustang basses, why pick the Framus for that show? And he just said: "Oh, it's really light and easy to play." That was it! Musicians pick instruments for different reasons, I guess.'

Keith Richards 'Micawber' Fender Telecaster

Keith Richards' 'Micawber' Fender Telecaster is the stuff of Stones legend. It's originally a 1953, acquired around the time of *Exile On Main Street*. Wilkins Micawber is a character in Charles Dickens's 1850 novel *David Copperfield*. Why Richards named his go-to Tele after a character caught up in debt and eventually emigrating to Australia, only Keith knows. Maybe heed the words of Wilkins' wife Emma in the book: 'I will never desert Mr Micawber!'

Richards' Micawber Tele is strung in open G with the low sixth-string removed (low to high, it's tuned GDGBD).

Andy Babiuk: 'I've played hundreds of Fender Telecasters over the years – and then I got to play Micawber. I tell you: this guitar has a resonance to it, it rings. That's probably the reason why Keith continues to go back to it. It's been modified, but it's a tool, y'know?

'If you look at the photos, where the neck joins the body, the fretboard is actually scalloped on the bass side. Not by intention – it's where Keith strums, and over the years he was just cutting away through the wood. That tells you how much he loves this guitar.

'It's the guitar, I believe, Eric Clapton gave to Keith for his 27th birthday. Historically, again, it's really important. A very cool guitar.'

Keith Richards' Gibson Les Paul TV Junior 'Dice'

Richards' 1958 Gibson Les Paul TV Junior is a battered '58. He named this guitar 'Tumbling Dice' or 'Dice' for short. It's one of Keith's favourite guitars. A set of Grover tuners and a Leo Quan Badass adjustable bridge have replaced the factory parts.

Andy Babiuk: 'When Keith gets a guitar, it's not because it's new and shiny. When he got this, it had a sticker on it like you'd find on a car or something, a picture of dice. Keith likes naming his guitars, so it was always going to be Dice. It's another guitar used on a lot of live shows and many records, too. But not for *Tumbling Dice*. His main use of it now is in regular tuning, but capo'd. It's used pretty much always for *Midnight Rambler* in Stones shows.' ➔

Left, the infamous Micawber '53 Telecaster, with added humbucker and five-saddle brass bridge. Right: Tumbling Dice, the '58 LP TV Junior, with Badass bridge, Grovers and Telecaster knobs

'I've played hundreds of Telecasters, but Micawber has a resonance, it rings. That's probably why Keith continues to go back to it'

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Ronnie Wood's Zemaitis Customs

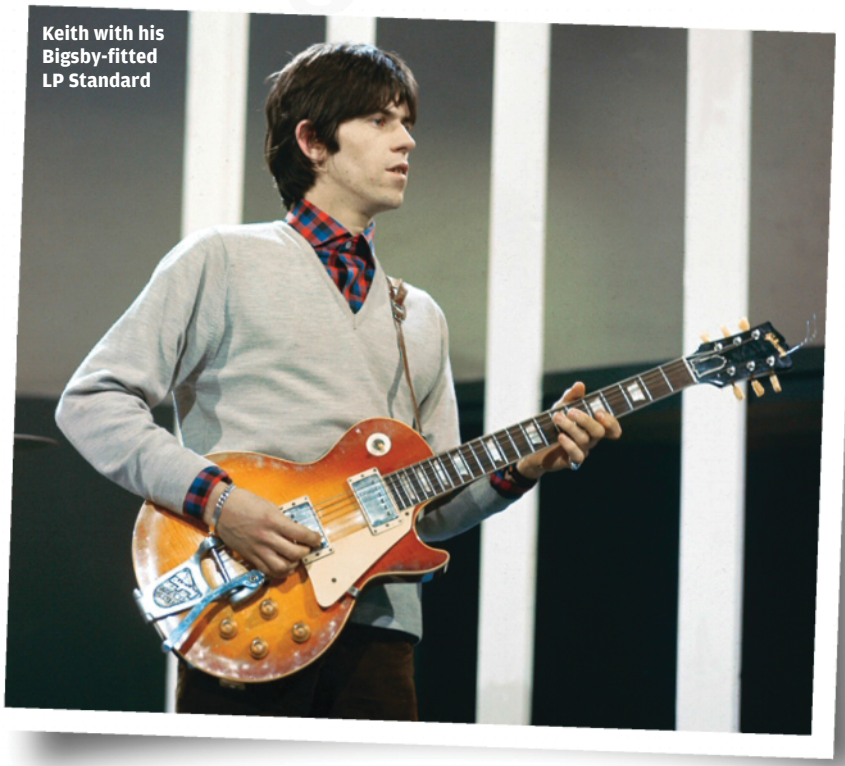
If Keith Richards has a taste for classic big-brand marques, Ronnie Wood also likes a custom-built guitar. Wood's Zemaitis six-strings are renowned to Stones guitar-spotters, and all are unique as Ronnie himself.

Andy Babiuk: 'Again, Ronnie was so cool about letting us go through his guitars. I'm sure your readers know the history of Tony Zemaitis – that is a story in itself. But I think, in the history of the Stones, this black Zemaitis disc-top with three pickups is really important. Ronnie has used it since he joined the Stones, he still uses it all the time. With the Stones, it's always in open E tuning. But it was also played on a ton of Faces songs, and I love the Faces.

'It's another interesting instrument. I got to hang out with the Stones on their last tour and got to look at the guitar more closely. It looks like a solidbody, but it's not. It's part-hollow, but stuffed with cotton. Not like cotton balls you'd get from a drug store, but untreated raw cotton. Tony probably put in there for a different kind of tone, I don't really know.

'The other funny thing is that Ronnie originally wanted the guitar to be a bolt-on neck, but Tony Zemaitis didn't build guitars like that, he thought bolt-ons were inferior. Tony built guitars with set-necks. But to appease Ronnie, Tony put a backplate on it with screws, and then a skull-image on the backplate, smiling, just as a joke for Ronnie.

'Ronnie's metal front Zemaitis is also in the book. He had it specially made for the Stones '78 tour. That's fascinating too. We got some really good close-up photos of that one. There's kitschy little engraved motifs on it. 'Stones Concert Tonight!' Little pictures of teepees, 'Camp Woody: Stones Hill', 'Here Be Dragons'... it's like an old treasure map.



Keith with his Bigsby-fitted LP Standard

Photo: David Redfern/Getty

Left: Ronnie's chambered 'disc-top' black Zemaitis

'From afar you don't see the detail, but up close it's really neat. Zemaitis are an elitist brand, but Ronnie used them so much live and in the studio, it was great to capture these up-close. There's not a lot of Zemaitis guitars out there. You had to get them custom-made. So these are both really cool guitars.'

Keith Richards' Gibson Les Paul Standard With Bigsby

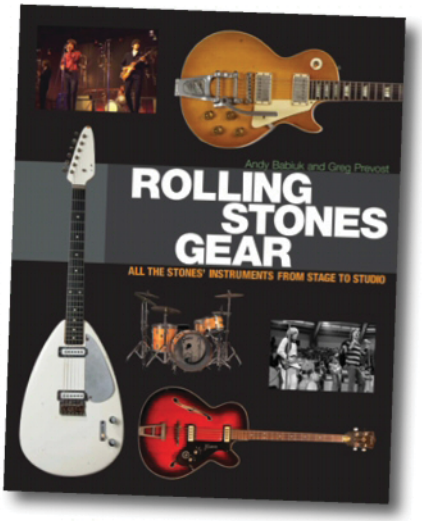
A legendary Les Paul. Richards was one of the first famous players of a Les Paul 'burst in the 1960s. He didn't use it that much, and it's long been gone from the Stones' stash. But it has its own unique story, going from Keith Richards to Mick Taylor, coming back, and then being reportedly stolen in the early 1970s from Villa Nellcôte in Southern France during the recording of *Exile On Main Street*.

Andy Babiuk: 'I spoke to Mick Taylor about this. His own Les Paul got ripped off when he was playing with John Mayall. Mick needed a Les Paul – that was the tone he wanted. Via a mutual friend, he found out that Keith would sell guitars, but Ian Stewart [Stones keyboardist and 'sixth member'] would often arrange any sale. Mick went to Olympic Studios in London, where the Stones were recording in the next room. Mick simply bought the guitar and left. And that was way before Mick was in the Rolling Stones.

'There are great pictures of Mick Taylor playing that guitar with John Mayall, just in clubs. And later, of course, Mick joins the Stones. Apparently, Keith didn't even realise it had been sold! So Keith uses it again in 1969, like it had never been sold.

'We have some great photos in the book from early Stones days of Keith with this guitar, on the Stones' *Chess Sessions* and RCA recordings. You can really see the grain.'

'Tony Zemaitis didn't like bolt-on necks – he built set-neck guitars. But to appease Ronnie, he put a backplate on it with screws'



Rolling Stones Gear, by Andy Babiuk and Greg Prevost, is out now via Backbeat Books

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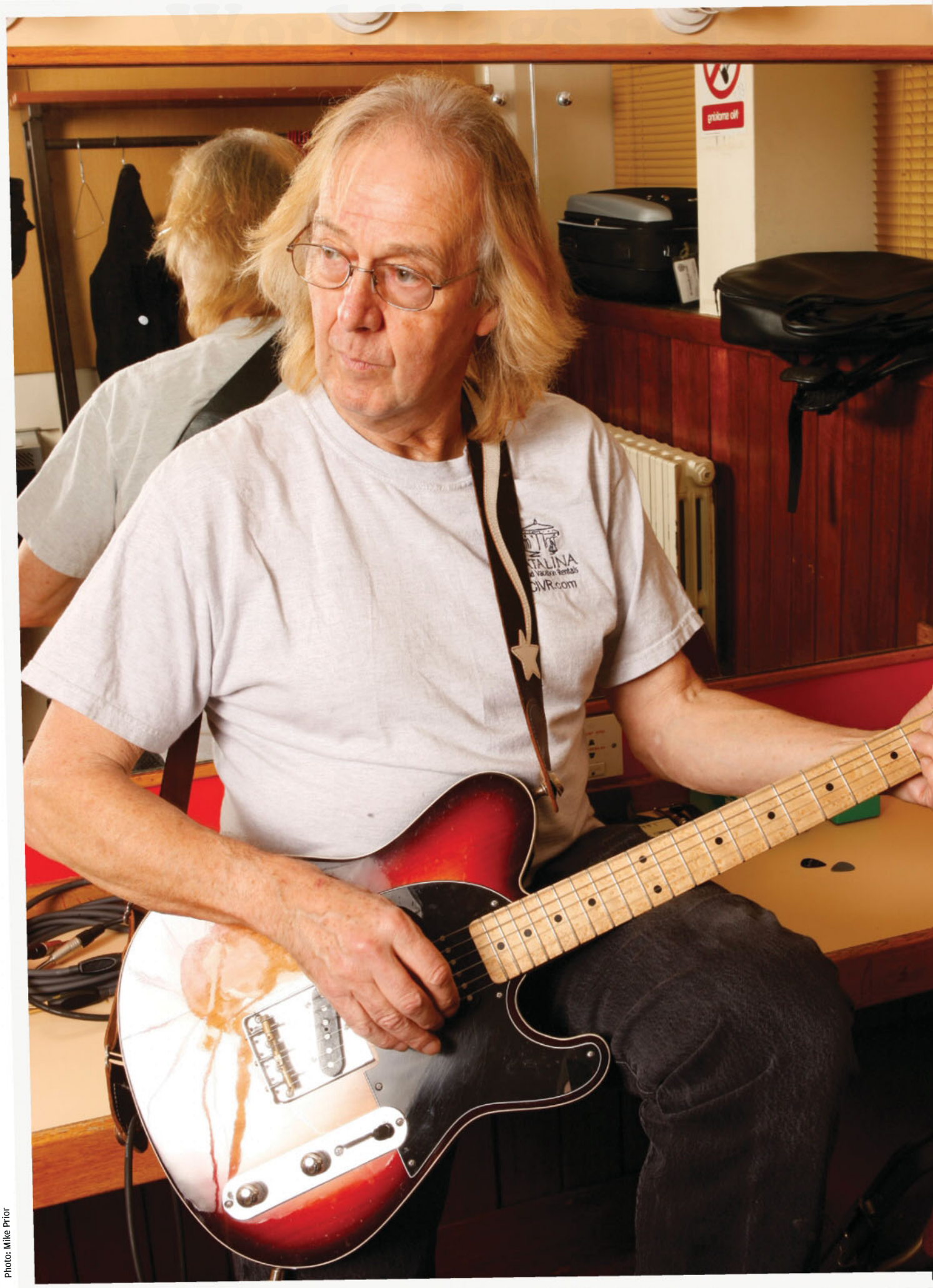

Photo: Mike Prior

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It's Been SO LONG

The boss of the Spencer Davis Group led a full and intriguing musical life both before and after the band's period of maximum chart impact in the mid-1960s. **Alan Clayson** relates his story

Rhythm and blues came to Birmingham on a foggy October Monday in 1963 when the Golden Eagle, a pub beneath the shadow of the town hall, hosted the inaugural meeting of the Rhythm Unlimited club. Reviewing the evening, *Midland Beat* commented 'the most authentic touches were provided by Spencer Davis, whose singing and twelve-string guitar and harmonica brought roars of appreciation from the fans'.

'Authentic' he may have been, but there was no trace of the ghetto or chain gang in the background of Spencer David Nelson Davis, born in Swansea at the outbreak of the Second World War. An early memory was of Luftwaffe bombs pounding the city. On leaving grammar school, Spencer moved to London to become a Customs and Excise clerk for 18 soul-destroying months. 'We always wrote in red ink,' he chuckles.'It was like writing in my own blood. I always admired one man who worked away all morning. Then he went out for lunch and never came back.' Boosted by a back-dated pay award, Davis found the courage to re-enrol at his old school as a sixth former and then begin a degree in German at Birmingham University in 1960.

He may have seemed rather bookish to some, but Spencer had performed music in public for many years, both in eisteddfod choirs and boy scout gang shows. Two of his uncles played instruments – one mandolin, and one banjo – and this inspired him to spend five hard-earned pounds on a guitar of non-specific make with a butterfly etched on its front. His mastery of this instrument – and a serviceable baritone voice – enabled him to front a band called the Saints, who busked at various London tube stations and appeared at Soho's 2i's coffee bar and lesser shrines of British rock. They'd even recorded a privately pressed single of Buddy Holly's *Oh Boy!* and the skiffle standard *Midnight Special*.

Spencer's scholarly nature led him to spend time researching beneath skiffle's veneer and uncovering its blues and hillbilly nitty-gritty. Visits to specialist record shops in London and Birmingham polarized his tastes in traditional Americana, and to replace the 'butterfly' guitar, he bought a 12-string just like Leadbelly's. This novelty made quite an impression on the Midlands' music fans. 'Spence was a kind of monument in Birmingham,' avid listener Steve Winwood observed. 'He was the guy everyone went to see because he had a 12-string guitar.'.

A born organiser, Davis had become a power on the university's entertainments committee – so much so that he booked himself for college bar functions, sometimes as part of a duo with Stourbridge blues chanteuse Christine Perfect, later of Fleetwood Mac. Otherwise, he was a member of drummer Pete York's Excelsior Jazz Band, who traded principally in the mainstream flair of Basie and ➔

Gear

Acoustics
Two Tony Zemaitis 12-strings (1960 and 1965), Guild and Yamaha 12-strings. 1920 Gibson mandolin, Martin D-28, National Tricone

Electrics
Peavey Omniac JD, two Squier JV Strats, two US Strat reissues. Also used a Harmony Stratotone and a 1960s Yamaha SA semi-acoustic

Amps
Fender blackface Deluxe Reverb and two Vox AC30 reissues

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Steve Winwood, Pete York, Spencer Davis and Muff Winwood pose outside the Royal Albert Hall

Photo: Michael Ochs Archives/Getty

'They launched into John Lee Hooker's Dimples and my mouth fell open' – Noddy Holder

Spencer Davis: Big In Germany

When The Spencer Davis Group toured West Germany in 1966, Spencer with his fluent command of German took most of the press calls. His awareness of the federal republic's political extremities had prompted some ill-timed remarks to *Melody Maker* about the election success of the 'new Nazis' in Bavaria. However, having let slip his Hertfordshire address, Spencer precipitated an avalanche of fan mail on its publication by *Bravo* magazine, whose 'Golden Otto' award was won by the group after a readers' poll put them ahead of the Who and Small Faces but behind the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick and Tich.

A more personal triumph for Spencer was the occasion when he, rather than Steve Winwood, sang lead on an A-side of a single, albeit only in Germany. The song was a medley of the traditional *Madel Ruck Ruck Ruck* and *Det War In Schöneberg*, rocked-up from a 1913 operetta by Walter Kollo, with its bierkeller jollity reined in by a riff borrowed from *High Time Baby* (the original B-side of *Keep On Running*). It was something of a breath of fresh air amid the unbroken vinyl diet of blues and blue-eyed soul that otherwise filled shows in the Fatherland.

Ellington. However, Spencer's four-song intermission became the highlight of the set. This was typified by *Midnight Special, The House of the Rising Sun, Careless Love* and, most spectacularly, *I Got My Mojo Working*.

Davis' honours course meant a spell studying in Berlin, where he developed a liking for pilsner beer and honed his way with boozy audiences in Teutonic beatnik hangouts by covering the unpolished dustbowl ramblings of Woody Guthrie. With a rucksack on his back and clutching his guitar, Spencer would take off in summer for France, earning centimes as a street singer. It was a time of agreeable wanderlust, but he also kept his eye on his studies; a few years later, in 1966, he would even deliver a lecture on popular culture and entertainment at Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Studies. 'To me, Spencer was and still is the typical university student,' mused Steve Winwood that same year. 'He still uses long words all the time that nobody understands.'

Finding himself at a vocational crossroads in 1963, Davis vacillated between music and teaching, favouring the latter for a while after wife Pauline presented him with a daughter at their Sutton Coldfield home on Christmas Eve. 'I never expected him to be a pop star,' pondered Pauline, 'but I always knew he'd be a success in one way or another.'

Before long, the warm receptions for Spencer's Excelsior solo spot were noted, and he was offered a Golden Eagle residency – but there was a drawback for the solo performer. 'I had to take over from the Renegades, an out-and-out rock band with dyed hair who played their guitars behind their backs,' he explains. 'I felt I needed a rock band to compete.'

Luckily enough the Birmingham musical scene was like a crowded game of musical chairs, and Davis always managed to procure musicians to back him every week. Among them was one Steve Winwood, then just a schoolboy. 'I had some of my happiest moments there,' Winwood later enthused. 'Everything was informal. We never used to learn any numbers as such. Spencer would just say "We'd like to play something or other," then we'd vamp like mad while he sang his own words.'

Finding the turnover of personnel prohibitive in his campaign for more bookings, Davis proposed that he and Steve formed a more fixed set-up to be named the Spencer Davis Rhythm And Blues Quartet. With drummer Pete York on board plus Winwood's elder brother Muff on bass, the new entity first cast its net at a students' dance in April 1963. The full calendar of engagements that followed compensated for the landlocked West Midlands' lack of the regional identity that had fired the Merseybeat craze. Of the Second City's chart contenders, only the Rockin' Berries, the Fortunes, the Moody Blues and what emerged as the Spencer Davis Group enjoyed lasting prosperity – but nearly all they had in common was that they were from the same part of the country.

Of all these acts, the one that opened Black Country star-in-waiting Noddy Holder's eyes widest – and he was far from alone in this – was the Spencer Davis ensemble, as illustrated by his response to a show in 1964. 'They were very unassuming – and then this kid on the organ suddenly screamed, "I love the

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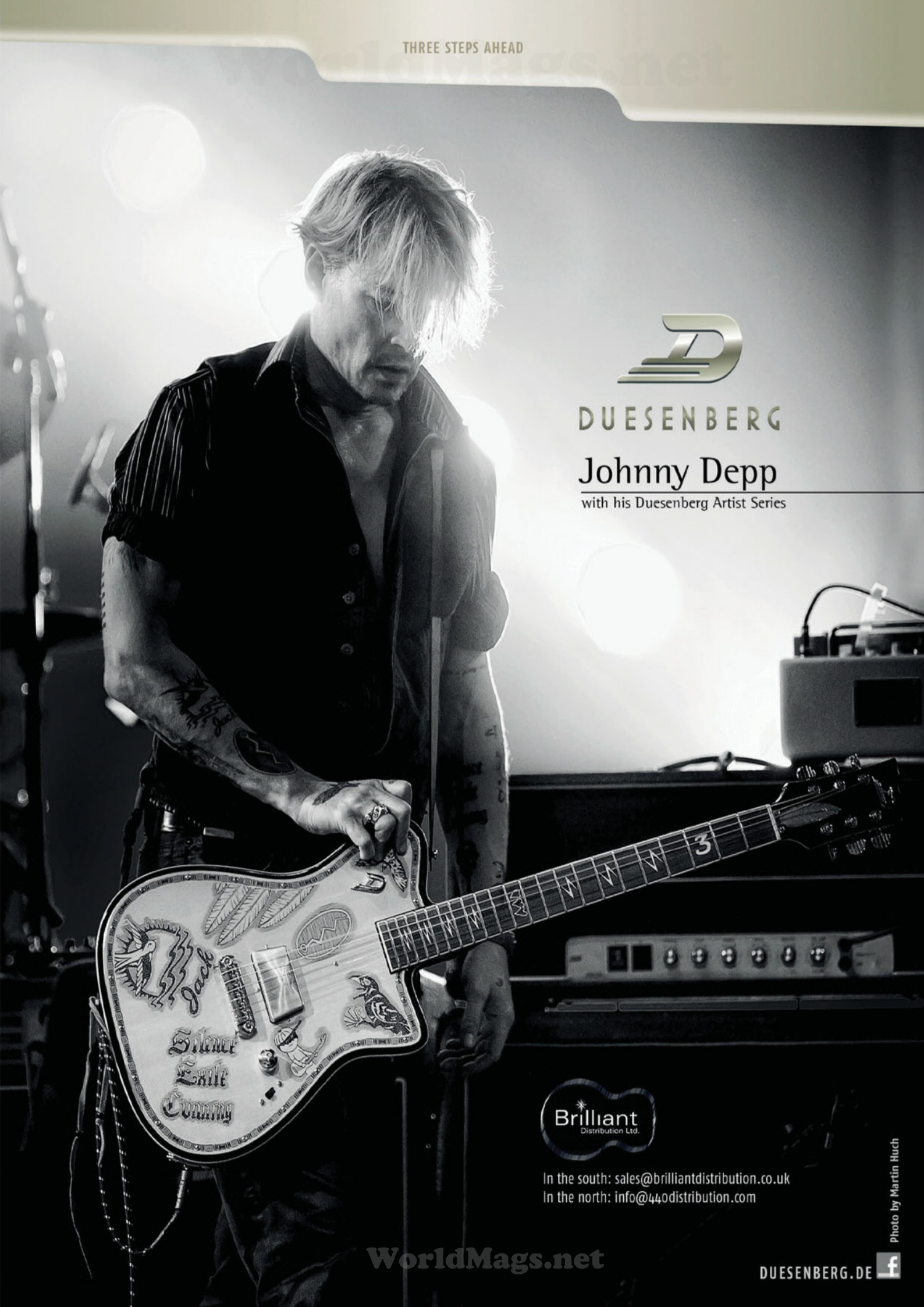

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Listen up

THE SPENCER DAVIS GROUP
Mojo Rhythms And Midnight Blues
(2000)
Sessions on BBC radio's Light Programme mingle onstage standbys with hits including *Time Seller* minus the orchestral strings

SPENCER DAVIS AND PETER JAMESON
It's Been So Long
(1970)
This diverting all-acoustic album is traceable to Peter booking Spencer to play at his blues club in London's East End

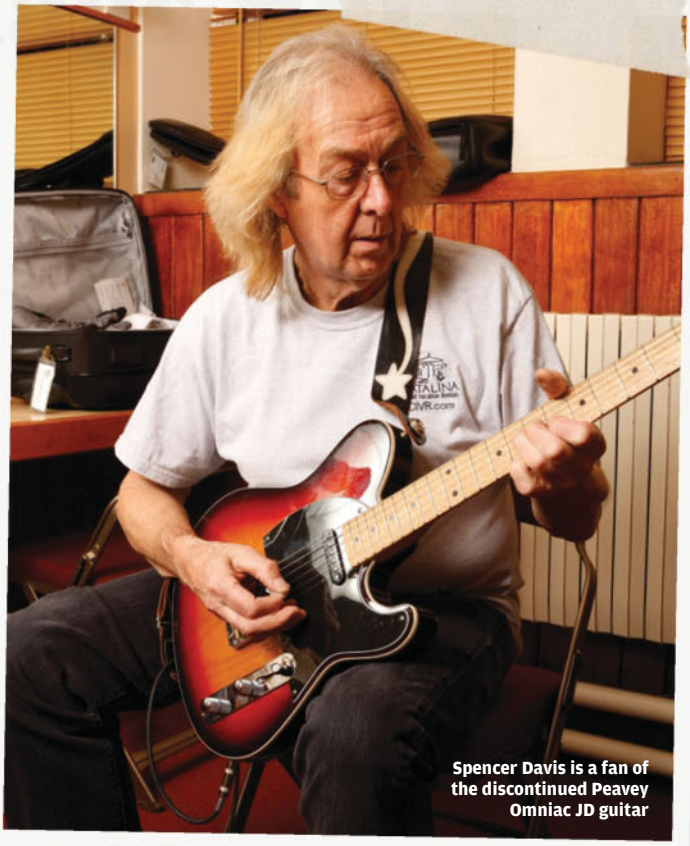
SPENCER DAVIS
So Far
(2008)
With memorable songs and some inspired accompaniment from a crack band, this fine blend of soul, R&B and folk influences might stand as Spencer's magnum opus

And another thing...

***So Far*'s finale was *Private Number*, a duet with Dusty Springfield, recorded in 1984. From the same album, *The Viper* was revived in 2013 by salsa specialists El Chicano of Los Angeles**

way she walks..." and launched into that old John Lee Hooker number, *Dimples*. Gosh, my mouth fell open and I felt a chill down my spine. That was the night I discovered rhythm and blues for the first time.'

Spencer Davis has no doubts about the early talent of his young vocalist. 'Steve never sounded so good as he did with us,' he says. Yet that voice of lived-in passion and his instinctive command of any fretboard or keyboard instrument were perfectly framed by the road-drilled accompaniment from Spencer, Muff, and Pete, all ministering to thrilling overall effect. Though they adopted the less unwieldy name of the Spencer Davis Group, the obvious talent of 15-year-old Steve – not to mention his teen appeal – was the wellspring of Spencer's gradual withdrawal from the main spotlight, though he continued to be rated as a competent, even distinctive singer and guitarist after the group went pro in spring 1964. Soon afterwards, they came under the managerial aegis of Chris Blackwell, an Anglo-Jamaican who negotiated a lease deal with Fontana, then parent company to his Island record label.


Spencer Davis is a fan of the discontinued Peavey Omniac JD guitar

> *'Steve Winwood never sounded as good as when he was with us' – Spencer Davis*

Recognised by Blackwell as the X-factor, young Steve was, with one exception, to be to the fore on all Spencer Davis Group A-sides – though Spencer was to sing the main track on 1965's *She Put The Hurt On Me* EP. He was granted two lead vocals per album too – but, as the smashes piled up after 1966's *Somebody Help Me* followed *Keep On Running* to #1, it became customary for billing to be extended with the phrase 'featuring Steve Winwood'.

Finally, after *Gimme Some Lovin'* – penned by Davis and the Winwoods – and, next, *I'm A Man* climbed high up the US Hot 100 in '67, there could have been no worse time for the boy wonder to quit to form Traffic. Then a second blow fell with the exit of Muff. But Spencer Davis and Pete York adopted another wunderkind, Eddie Hardin, whose worth lay in his youth, his keyboard dexterity and his strangled tenor. Other new recruits were to come and go, but the second Spencer Davis Group scored immediately with *Time Seller*, driven by cellos and double-basses. Hot on its heels, a Top Of The Pops plug pushed the Traffic-like *Mr Second Class* – also self-penned – into the Top 40.

Market pragmatism, however, obliged Davis to moderate any prog-rock aspirations to 'much more entertainment... like the old Group', according to a press release. By then, Pete and Eddie had left and Davis had rallied again 'with a rock'n'roll band... well, almost'. Yet, as the 1970s loomed, the general fading of the Winwood glory days was to prompt 1970's cryptic announcement in *Melody Maker*: 'Spencer Davis Has Left The Spencer Davis Group'.

Resuming his solo career, Spencer released a single in German of *Aquarius* from the *Hair* musical before uprooting to California. As Traffic jetted overhead, Spencer would be boarding a train with guitar and luggage. His partner for a while was bottleneck player Peter Jameson (who would be equally at ease playing for Dory Previn as John Lennon), but Davis chose to join guitarists Alun Davies and Jon Mark on an LP by blues legend Mississippi Fred McDowell. A subsequent project by Mark and Spencer foundered, but a venture into the folk clubs by Davis with Davies was more fruitful. However, a grander link-up with ex-Byrd 'Sneaky' Pete Kleinow (who'd produced Spencer's US-only *Mousetrap* album in 1972) and an Australasian rhythm section dispersed when the first of many reformations of the Spencer Davis Group made two albums before sundering.

After putting his languages degree to use as a technical translator in the mid-'70s, Davis accepted a post on Island's West Coast staff. He speculated later in other areas of entertainment, landing a lucrative 1983 video contract with old colleague Christine Perfect's Fleetwood Mac, and became a familiar and approachable figure at California's NAMM show both as well-received onstage entertainer of the promenading entrepreneurs and when rubbing a thoughtful chin himself over the goods on display.

In 1988, Spencer Davis returned to Britain for a first reunion tour with old musical friends. If not musically ambitious, there has always been a friendly, downhome ambience about these proceedings as the veterans swap banter about the old days between numbers. Since the turn of the century Spencer has been most conspicuously involved with Animals & Friends; health issues have curtailed his participation in their current national tour, but he's been busy working with Latin rockers El Chicano and is playing guitar on songs on their new album, due out in April.

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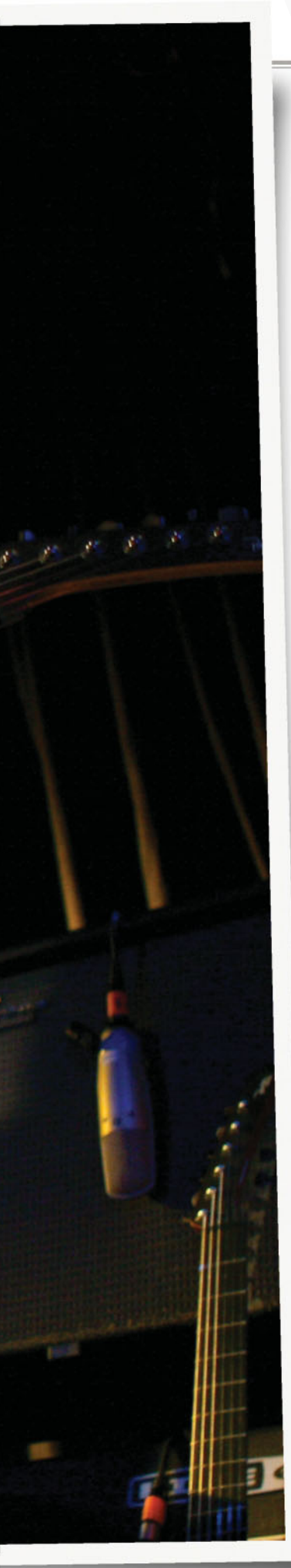

King Rocker

In keeping with King Crimson's multi-tentacled methods, Adrian Belew and friends are touring a show that will thrill fans of the band's classic material. Interview by **Michael Heatley**

When King Crimson fans flock to the Shepherds Bush Empire on 12 March 2014, they will be celebrating the history of a quintessentially English band. Or will they? First off, the talented triumvirate of Adrian Belew, Tony Levin and Pat Mastelotto – half of a 'double trio' line-up, as made popular by Crimson between 1994-'97 – are American. Secondly, the band known as the Crimson ProjeKCt are now operating in parallel to a relaunched outfit headed by founder Robert Fripp. Oh, and did we mention that Levin and Mastelotto are in both bands?

It's a situation that Belew, Crimson's undisputed frontman from the early '80s through to the mid-'90s, seems quite relaxed about. 'No one seems to really know what that means yet,' he drawls from his Tennessee home prior to a March-April European tour and Australasian dates in June. 'I was told at one point that they're going to tour for four weeks, period. And if that's true then it doesn't really change much. I would suggest everybody go and see both things if they can; I'm curious to see what they do. Crimson ProjeCKt is really for those that love the classics we've done over the years and want to see that done properly in a big-band formation. It's big, powerful, exciting music for people that have been there and seen it, but it's also for people who never did get to see it. So I think it serves its purpose well.'

The Crimson ProjeCKt had its roots in Three Of A Perfect Pair, a band camp Belew hosts in New York state with Levin and Mastelotto each summer. 'We put on a show every last day of the camp. The year 2011 was the 30th anniversary of Tony and me being in King Crimson, and that turned into the idea that maybe we should play the music beyond that. That turned into a regular-sized tour of the States, and that went down so well that we decided to continue – and fortunately, offers started coming in from all over the planet.

'For me, it's about celebrating this music that we were a part of, and we can do it authentically because we were the guys that helped create it. No-one else was going to do it, so let's go and have some fun with it.'

The interaction between bassists Julie Slick and Tony Levin is at the heart of the 'double trio'. In contrast to veteran Levin (also of Peter Gabriel fame), Slick was discovered as a 20-year old playing in Philadelphia with her younger brother. 'Even at that age,' marvels Belew, 'she had already developed something stylised; like Jack Bruce, she plays the instrument almost like a lead guitar and yet she's developed all the things necessary for it to do all the things you want from a bass, in terms of what it does to the rhythm of the song and the bottom end.

'When you put her and Tony together, it frees Tony up because he can bow parts, he can play guitar lines, or he can play the Stick, which he's a master at. It's almost like they're not two bass players; there are several instruments going on.' ➔

Gear

Signature Parker Fly into Liquid-Foot Pro Junior pedalboard plus volume and expression pedals. Effects: DigiTech HarmonyMan, Keeley compressor, Roland VG99 and Fractal Audio Axe-FX

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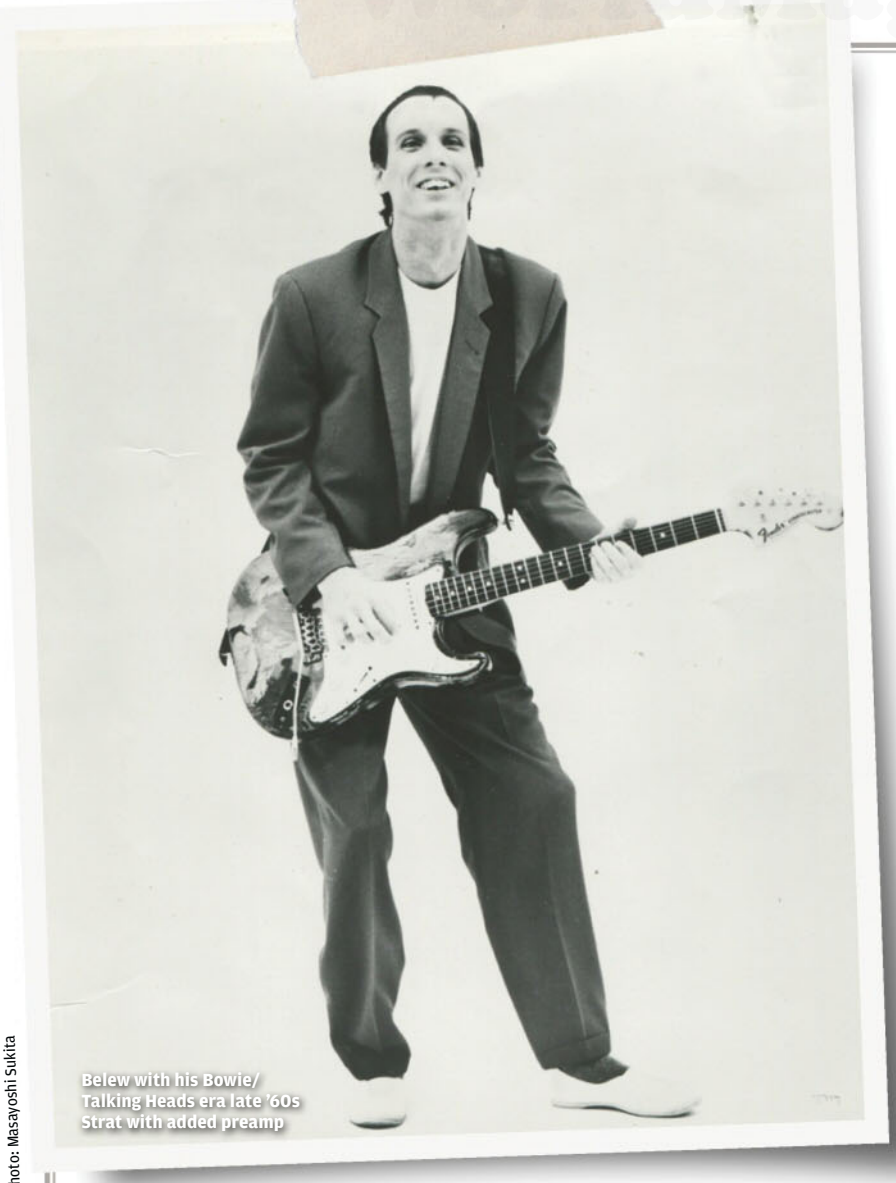

Belew with his Bowie/ Talking Heads era late '60s Strat with added preamp

Photo: Masayoshi Sukita

Drummers Tobias Ralph and Pat Mastelotto are Belew's favourite pairing of his KC tenure. 'They're on the same page mentally – and it even has a sense of humour about it, which has actually never been there before. Then there's [guitarist] Markus Reuter, who is Robert's replacement. He was a prime student of Robert's, knows exactly what Robert is doing and can play it perfectly and add his own elements to it.

'It's Crimson, but it's not – it's got its own way of doing things. I hate to use this term, but I refer to it as the fun King Crimson! When you get on stage everyone is happy and there's not that sort of tension there sometimes was. It's not quite as dark musically, but it's still as intense... I think that's built into the fabric of the music itself.'

> *'Crimson ProjeCKt has its own way of doing things. It's the fun King Crimson'*

Belew, a keen user of social media, stated on Facebook that he was 'glad to see last year go' because, as well as not getting a call from Fripp, a projected world tour with Nine Inch Nails was aborted at the rehearsal stage. 'Trent [Rezno] and I were hoping to re-invent the band. As it turned out, when we got in rehearsals and everything started in earnest, it just didn't go that way. In the end we were just learning each song exactly as it was on the record; within a couple of weeks it seemed like there wasn't going to be any reinvention of the band, so why was I there?

'They already had a great guitarist in Robin Fink, who's been with Trent since 1993; he knows the material inside out, way better than I'd ever know it if you wanted exactly what was on the record. I didn't feel being essentially a sideman was a role that I wanted to take at this point, and Trent agreed.

'We were going to learn something like 55 songs; we'd learned 21 in two and a half weeks and it seemed like it wasn't going anywhere new. That was only a disappointment inasmuch as I was looking forward to the challenge and going around the world in that kind of circumstance – but, at the same time, not that much as I really would prefer to be doing Flux!'

Flux is a concept dating from 1978 when Belew was touring with David Bowie. 'In Marseille, France, I had an experience – an epiphany if you want. I was sitting at the harbour, outside, between two cafes. They had their doors open, each were playing a different kind of radio station and one of them was going in and out and flipping to other stations. At the same time, I was hearing all the other things in the air in front of me – harbour sounds, bells and people talking in French, cars going by, laughter. Somehow it all just mixed in my head to make a piece of music and I thought, "This is the way I want my music to be someday."'

The belated result is Flux, for which Belew has already prepared 'well over 200 things that include events or sounds – I call them snippets if they're just little short things, even if they're musical or something else like audience laughter.

'It will be an app. You download it, and it will play for half an hour at a time. Each half hour will be different than any half hour you'll ever hear – or anyone else will ever hear. Statistically, it will be impossible for it to repeat itself because there are so many small elements and it's random every time, so nothing will ever line up the same. It's something that I intend to keep adding to. I can upload new music or new snippets or new songs for as long as I want to. It will depend on the acceptance of this idea as to how long I do that.'

Flux is now a working model. 'I'm hoping it will launch midway through this year. This is my fourth year working on it, but the problem – it's not a

BELEW, BOWIE AND ENO

Adrian first stepped into Robert Fripp's shoes in the late '70s playing with David Bowie, and the challenge proved to be another learning experience. 'Robert had played a fairly recent and big role in some of David's music. The funny thing was that, when David and Eno produced the records with Robert on them, particularly *Heroes*, they did it that composite kind of recording style where you play something and they go back, take two or three of your tracks and combine them to make something they thought was impossible to play.

'When David asked me to join his band, no-one had told me that that was how it had been done. So I figured out how to play it – all the things that were supposedly not playable! One day I walked into the studio, When we were recording the *Lodger* album, my first record with David and Brian Eno, they were laughing, saying, "You're so stupid; you didn't know that you can't play that!"'

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The six-piece Crimson ProjeKCt play material from the early '80s to the mid-'90s, plus a few '70s tunes

Photo: ?????????????????

problem, just the work that has to be done – is that it's never been done before. We want to make sure that it works properly and it has a certain amount of interactivity, and possibly some visual activity as well. Those are the final things to put in place.'

In terms of guitars, the Adrian Belew who a decade ago was talking custom-built Strats to *Guitar & Bass* has moved through Fender Mustangs to the Parker Fly, three of which will be on stage with him on the Crimson ProjeCKt tour. 'We designed the Adrian Belew model probably six, seven or eight years ago. The difference between that and a regular Parker Fly is the electronics. Ken Parker, I think, revolutionised the design of the guitar; he solved all the inherent problems and intonation, tuning problems and tremolo usage and so many other things. The weight of it, the feel, the resonant qualities – all those things he solved, but that was back in the '80s. So what I wanted to do with my own version was to modernise the electronics.

'Now it's a MIDI guitar, it has a sustainer, it has a Variax system in it – so with just three knobs this guitar can give you the sound of 25 other guitars. It can sustain forever and of course it can be connected by MIDI to anything. You can play it through a computer, a keyboard and guitar synthesisers. So that's what I changed about it. My guitars weigh four or five pounds; the only other change is we put these 12-stage custom car finishes on them that look beautiful under lighting. And that's the Adrian Belew model Parker Fly, which, for me, has changed my life.'

'My Parker Fly has MIDI, a sustainer and a Variax system. It's changed my life'

The concept of a backline is now history. 'I have them provide me with a couple of powered monitors, in other words just monitor cabinets, so there's some sound coming off the stage. I've been using in-ear systems with the Crimson ProjeCKt, because it's such a large sound and I'm right in the middle of it. I really don't need to have any amplification on the stage at all; I just do it to make sure that there's something coming from that spot on the stage that's supposed to be me!'

Back in 1980, when Adrian visited London with Talking Heads, it was 'a great time for me because my role in the band was just to go wild on guitar.' The support band was a then-unknown U2. Did Edge make any impression? 'I liked the sound he had; I thought it was very unique. Of course, it turns out that it is!' Perhaps the same could be said of Adrian Belew – still unlike anyone else, and loving every minute.

The Crimson ProjeCKt play London's Shepherd's Bush Empire on 12 March. See www.ticketweb.co.uk

Listen up

KING CRIMSON
Discipline
(1981)
Adrian's King Crimson debut. 'We didn't even realise we were setting a benchmark; we were just so excited about playing together...'

ADRIAN BELEW
Lone Rhino
(1982)
Belew's currently hard-to-find solo debut mixes instrumentals and skewed pop – the two sides of his character

CRIMSON PROJECKT
Live In Tokyo
(2012)
Recorded at Club Citta, this recording adds versions of *Larks Tongues In Aspic Part II* and *Red* to the expected later-period Crimson repertoire

And another thing...

Adrian was originally known as Steve Belew, but he chose a new name when he moved to Nashville to make it as a professional musician. Frank Zappa spotted him soon afterwards, so it must have worked

SELF-TAUGHT STAR

At the age of 16, Adrian was playing drums and singing in a teen band called the Denems (sic) in Cincinnati, Ohio. 'We wore denim outfits and played all the British Invasion music, especially the Beatles,' he explains. 'We were very popular in our little area.' Then belew fell ill with glandular fever. 'They told me I'd have to sit at home for two months, have a tutor and that I wouldn't be able to be active at all.

'So I borrowed an acoustic guitar from one of the guys in the band and basically taught myself. I figured it out my own way. When I came back to the band after two months I had written five songs and played them for the guys. They said, "What the hell are those chords?" I said, "This is a G demolished and this is a furnished flat" – because I didn't know anything. I had no teaching, so I didn't know the names of the chords.

'Gradually, over time, my education was completed by simply sitting down and trying to figure out other people's records. I did a lot of that over many, many years, but I still don't know the names of all the chords I write!'

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NKM DYNAMIC DRIVE

BSL HYBRID CHORUS

LYN DYNAMIC PHASER

LAX GLASS CHORUS

SYD STRING REVIVER

LHR DYNAMIC DISTORTION

CGN DYNAMIC DELAY

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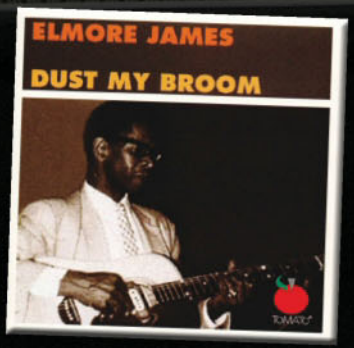
ELMORE JAMES [1937]
DUST MY BROOM



Recorded by a veritable parade of famous artists, including the original recording of the track by Robert Johnson (when it was called *I Believe I'll Dust My Broom*), none have ever quite lived up to the hypnotic power of Elmore James' version. The enduring legacy of the blues – not to mention the high-octane charms of old-school slide guitar – are there for all to behold. Some may feel the blues shuffle has been over-used to the point of extinction, but no one who hears Elmore James deliver this classic cut with charm and a bucketload of mojo would think the shuffle's ability to move the listener has gone for good.

CHUCK BERRY [1958]
JOHNNY B. GOODE

If Michael J Fox's 1985 film *Back To The Future* is to be believed, Chuck Berry came across the sound he was looking for (and *Johnny B. Goode*) from a kid playing at a high-school dance. Total and utter poppycock, we know – and the legions of guitar players who've taken on the task of busting out the classic riff over the years don't need telling how tricky the mix of wild abandon and complete precision is to get anywhere close to being right. If Chuck Berry had retired the minute he'd finished recording *Johnny B. Goode* then his place in rock'n'roll legend would still have been assured.

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THE KINKS [1964]
YOU REALLY GOT ME

Power chords are truly a gift that keeps on giving for guitarists – electric guitarists in particular. For a start they can fit in to a song regardless of whether it's a major or minor key, and as they are based on the root and the fifth you don't have to put your fretting fingers through too much torture to play them. If that wasn't enough, knowing how to play power chords means you can emulate the majestic riffage of *You Really Got Me*. Ray Davies is responsible for many a classic tune, but the choppy brilliance of the Kinks' third single ranks among his best output. And that's even before you start on its influence on hard rock and heavy metal...

THE BEATLES [1965]
DAY TRIPPER

You, no doubt, are well-versed in all the ways in which the Fab Four revolutionised music – but let's just take some time out to celebrate the sheer genius of that riff from *Day Tripper*. It's chirpiness means it often gets overlooked by the more serious muso. However, once you get it under your fingers – it also doubles up as a handy, melodic way to warm up your fretting digits – it'll be a constant companion for life. In fact, the only danger is that you'll hear it in your sleep. It comes in handy as a way of lighting up a listener's day, as you can't help but smile when you hear it. The *Day Tripper* riff is a rare, underrated Beatles gem.

THE ROLLING STONES [1965]
(I CAN'T GET NO) SATISFACTION

If you've ever doubted whether Keith Richards has earned the right to be called 'The Human Riff', listening to this track should settle the argument for the rest of time. A lot has been made of Jagger's suggestive lyrics, but without the fuzzed-up, primal backing of Keef's intended horn line it would be sorely lacking the kind of dangerous swagger that was the Stones' trademark back then. Keith Richard's has claimed in subsequent interviews that the *Satisfaction* riff is part of his DNA, and has appeared in various forms throughout his work. And who can blame the man for letting one riff influence him so much... it's just so darn fine.

JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE [1967]
PURPLE HAZE

Lovable, sexy and presented with the right amount of rock'n'roll abandon; an apt description of both Jimi Hendrix when he came to the UK. *Purple Haze* is one of Jimi's signature songs, and while he could pull off show-stopping guitar pyrotechnics (and arson, on the odd occasion), he didn't let that stop him from laying some glorious riffs down as the main foundation of his playing. For the more technically-minded among you, *Purple Haze* contains the dominant seventh sharp ninth chord that would be known as 'the Hendrix chord'. For those that don't care, the Purple Haze riff is an instant path to rock salvation.

THE ROLLING STONES [1968]
JUMPIN' JACK FLASH

There are many ways to a great rock'n'roll guitar riff, and Keith Richards discovered a proper humdinger when he started experimenting with different guitar tunings. You may need to get to grips with open D tuning with a capo plus a Nashville-tuned overdub to create a spot-on rendition of *Jumpin' Jack Flash*, but you don't need any kind of education to know it's a lick from the top drawer. A wonderful marriage of swing, sass and tension, this riff can cause even the most dance-averse humans to start moving in (mostly) rhythmic ways. Once you've learned this riff you'll possess untold amount of power on your audience; use it wisely.

LED ZEPPELIN [1969]
WHOLE LOTTA LOVE

For millions of UK music fans, the *Whole Lotta Love* riff is the sound of the Top 40 chart rundown. It worked because Jimmy Page's groovacious yet brutal guitar led you to believe that a higher power was demanding your attention – and, by jingo, it got it. We'll leave aside any controversy about the songwriting copyright for the track at this juncture and just urge everyone to listen to it again without delay as a blues-based, hard rockin' pick-me-up par excellence. Indeed, we won't have a go at you if you've never heard it before... in some ways we wish we could listen to it for the first time so it could rock our world to its core one more time.

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JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE [1970]
VOODOO CHILD (SLIGHT RETURN)

Anything to do with guitar-playing and riffs is, sooner rather than later, going to involve James Marshall Hendrix. His status as the greatest guitar player of all time hasn't been in much danger for over three decades now and, regardless of whether you prefer the single version or the more raucous album cut of *Voodoo Chile,* this is one of Hendrix's finest achievements. Indeed, for many this riff is not only the finest of all time, it remains the best example of what the electric guitar is capable of producing. Yep, that sure is a heavy load to carry, but if there's a riff that's muscular enough to bear that kind of burden, it's this one.

DEREK AND THE DOMINOS [1971]
LAYLA

Sometimes you just want to wallow in some heartbreak, and that's when you reach for your copy of *Layla*. Plenty have tried and failed to emulate the high-octane, end-of-tether power of Eric Clapton's riff and if you've ever tried to play it, it's easy to understand why. Everything about it suggests you should play it a thousand times faster and with more histrionics than you should. Eric Clapton certainly earned his 'Slowhand' moniker on this one, and dishes out the emotional torment at exactly the right pitch. Clapton has had a long and distinguished career – and this iconic riff is a worthy testament to the guitar hero.

LED ZEPPELIN [1971]
BLACK DOG

While Jimmy Page's reputation as a riff-master general shouldn't be questioned, it was his Led Zeppelin colleague John Paul Jones who suggested sticking his careering guitar masterpiece into *Black Dog*. A man noted for his desire not to deliver the ordinary, JPJ wanted to create a specially complex track for the band's fourth album, but that didn't stop the song from becoming a live favourite for Led Zeppelin fans. Forget about the time signature issues and Page's army of multi-tracked guitars; at the heart of this cut is a riff that is well worth getting to know. It's truly one for all the guitar riff-lovin' connoisseurs out there.

THE ROLLING STONES [1971]
BROWN SUGAR

Who says you can't dance to blues-rock? Whether you want to play it in open G tuning like Keith Richards does or simply stick to standard, the classic opening riff to *Brown Sugar* is true melodic bliss that never loses its power. Other aspects of Keith's playing to note on the track is the way he can switch timing, even for parts of a phrase, to be in time with Jagger's vocal melody. Bill Wyman claimed that the Stones were the only band he'd ever witnessed where people followed the guitarist and not the drummer – and when you're a veritable Pied Piper of riffage like Keith Richards, that policy is a recipe for success, and no mistake.

DEEP PURPLE [1973]
SMOKE ON THE WATER

It couldn't really be left out of a list of great guitar riffs, could it? Such has been this song's popularity with guitarists over the years, some music shops have even been forced to ban its patrons from playing those famous opening chords. It's easy to understand why you'd be tempted to perform it in public: as riffs go, Blackmore's baby is a winning combination of being pretty straightforward and badass to boot. Indeed, its simplicity is an essential part of its power. Ritchie Blackmore may be more interested in playing traditional folk these days, but his riffing legacy will keep on rocking for the foreseeable future.

AEROSMITH [1975 & 1986]
WALK THIS WAY

Whether it's the original version or the '80s collaboration with hip-hop legends Run DMC that first turned them on, this riff has been on guitar players' 'must-learn' list for generations. Heck, even if you have no interest in learning the guitar, it's been plenty of people's go-to air guitar tune (irrespective of the levels of alcohol in their bloodstream). Joe Perry's finest hour is one of those forces of nature that's impossible for normal human beings to resist – especially when delivered as deftly as you hear on the record. Perry may have been one of the Toxic Twins, but *Walk This Way* is a piece of life-affirming music.

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BLUE ÖYSTER CULT [1976]
(DON'T FEAR) THE REAPER

Although they were no one-hit wonders, it's fair to say that the success of *(Don't Fear) The Reaper* overshadowed the rest of Blue Öyster Cult's work. Apart from possessing a tasty bit of cowbell action (check out the Will Ferrell clip on YouTube if you don't already know it), the A minor signature riff is a stone-cold classic. A lot of the legendary riffs are muscular titans fuelled with machismo, but not so *(Don't Fear) The Reaper,* which induces haunting melancholy... but Blue Öyster Cult mainman Buck Dharma delivers one of the best soundtracks for those wanting to contemplate the meaning of existence you're ever likely to hear.

DIRE STRAITS [1985]
MONEY FOR NOTHING

Given that it was a satirical take on rock superstardom, *Money For Nothing* certainly helped propel Mark Knopfler and Dire Straits to, erm, world-conquering rock superstardom. But despite the irony, and whatever the song's protagonist thinks about successful musicians, the song's main riff is one of those 'once heard, never forgotten' numbers that deserves appreciation and respect. If you're looking to achieve the complete sonic recreation, once you've got the notes down, you'll need a Gibson Les Paul with out-of-phase pickups and a CryBaby wah to walk the same path as Mark Knopfler.

GUNS N'ROSES [1989]
SWEET CHILD O'MINE

Slash has been credited with almost single-handedly saving rock music (and sales figures of the Gibson Les Paul) from the doldrums for a whole generation of music fans, and, regardless of all his subsequent achievements since, the riff to *Sweet Child O'Mine* remains his calling card. Supposedly starting out as a mere string-skipping warm-up exercise, it was only when Slash's initially sceptical bandmates began working on the tune – indeed, bassist Duff McKagan claims his bass riff was a jokey attempt to poke even more fun at it – did they realise they'd found something. Nowadays it's seen as Guns N'Roses' most memorable moment.

NIRVANA [1991]
SMELLS LIKE TEEN SPIRIT

Historically, *Smells Like Teen Spirit* is credited with being the clarion call of a new 'X' generation – one that devoured the pretentious, over-the-top trappings rock music had acquired. Powering this anthem by Kurt Cobain and the chaps is an urgent, dropped D riff-bomb that takes no prisoners. The idea that Cobain had more feeling than technical guitar ability has been repeated so many times it's now entered the realms of cliché, but this doesn't diminish the effect this riff can still have on the listener. In some ways, *Smells Like Teen Spirit* is a modern-day *Smoke On The Water* – and that's meant as a compliment.

METALLICA [1991]
ENTER SANDMAN

James Hetfield and Kirk Hammett are one of the finest guitar duos of all time, and this track from Metallica's fifth album is a great example of how a guitar figure can power a whole song. The story goes that drummer Lars Ulrich suggested that the first part of the original guitar line be repeated three times and that it should only then be followed by the end part, and the famous riff emerged. Bless Mr Ulrich, for the main riff is the jumping-off point for everything that follows, without losing its identity or power. It's truly a heavy, heavy monster sound that will suitably scare the children. Heck, it's a riff even non-headbangers can appreciate.

NIRVANA [1992]
COME AS YOU ARE

Some guitar players believe there's no good reason to ever use a chorus pedal. Well, playing this riff is one good reason, for its trippy, watery sound contributes hugely to the confessional, menacing power of the track. Trademark Nirvana dynamics and mind-melting Cobain lyrics do their job of decorating the song nicely, but it's the main riff that acts as the tune's heartbeat. We're not going to deny the riff's similarities to the Killing Joke track *Eighties* – Cobain certainly didn't, and it's a great track in it's own right. That shouldn't take anything away from *Come As You Are,* however, which remains a highlight of the '90s.

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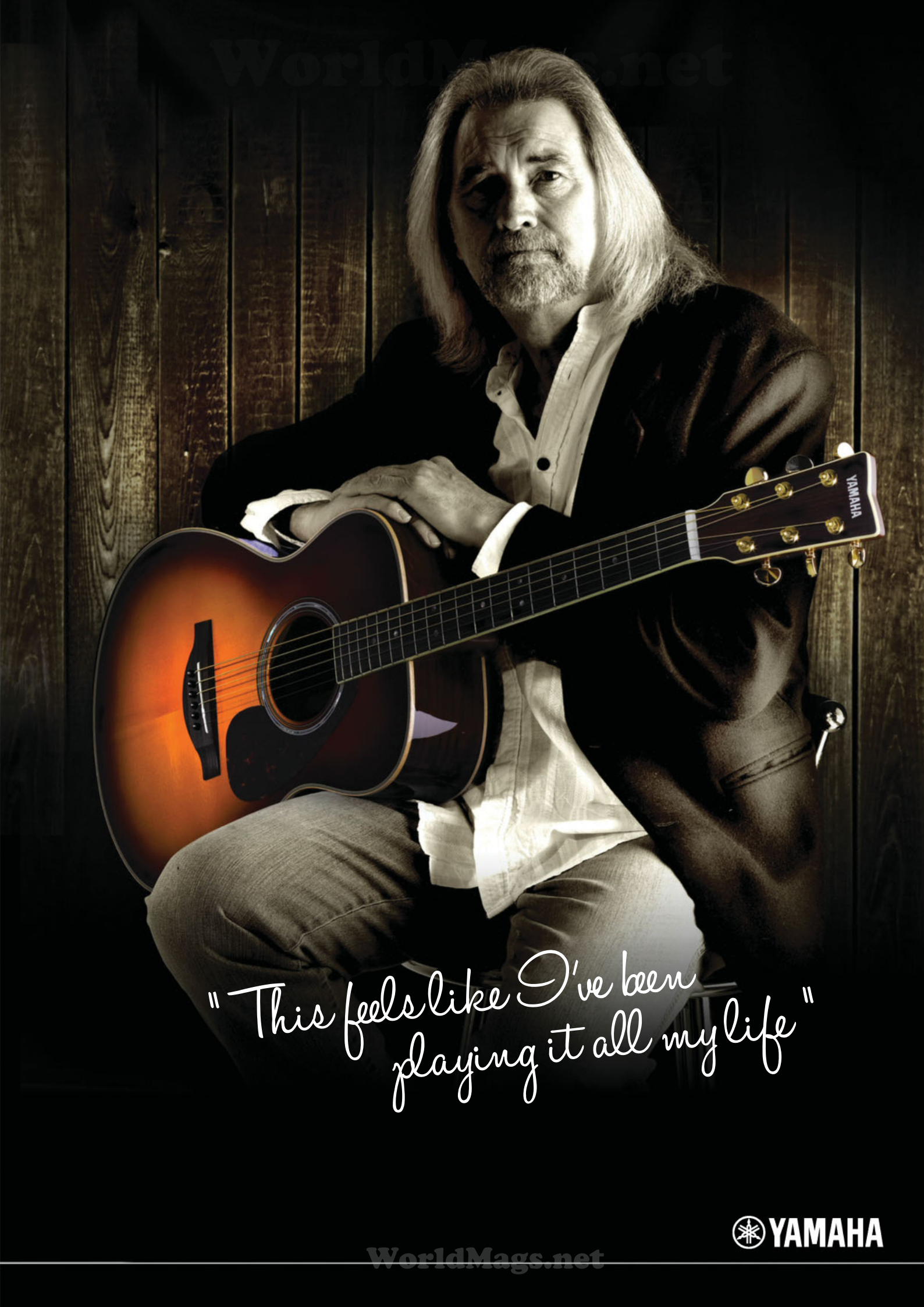

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GRETSCH

G5620T Electromatic Center-Block

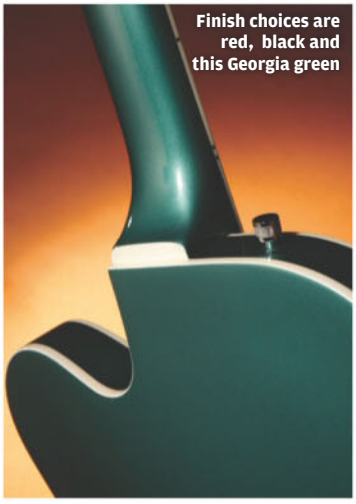
With a brand-new pickup arrangement, a Bigsby and a calming chunk of pine running down the middle, this semi-acoustic aims to nail the best of the old and the new. Review by **Marcus Leadley**

If any guitar maker succeeded in capturing the essence of the 1950s, it had to be Gretsch. As Gibson delivered conservative brilliance and Fender sketched the future, Gretsch embraced the era of Cadillacs, rockabilly and Nashville-style country music with a vengeance. They might not always have been the best-crafted guitars, but they looked great and came loaded with gadgets and studded with switches and knobs. While the company modified and refined its models in the 1960s, Gretsch styling remained, for the most part, pretty consistent. The less than successful restyled models of the subsequent Baldwin era were largely forgotten when the company started to reinvent itself in the late '80s. The Gretsch catalogue today is all about classic models for different budgets – from the lower-cost South Korean Electromatics all the way up to US Custom Shop beauties at three times the price.

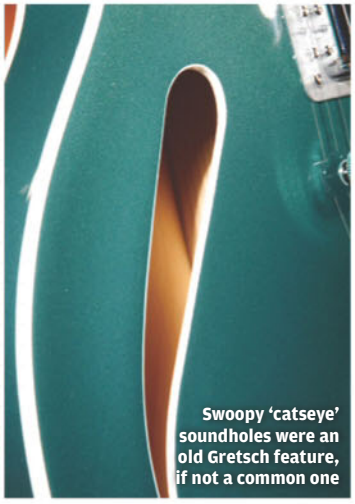
The G5620T Center-Block is differentiated from regular Gretsches in a number of ways. First there's the spruce centre block running the whole length of the body – a feedback-busting approach which puts the guitar in the same class of thinline semi-acoustics as the Gibson 335. Traditional Gretsches are fully hollow and feedback can be a problem once you move beyond smaller gigs; Billy Duffy famously had to stuff T-shirts and cotton wool into his White Falcon. Rather than two Filter'Tron humbuckers, this model sports a Filter'Tron in the bridge position and a Super HiLo'Tron at the neck, which is voiced for 'clean, high-end sparkle with a robust low end'. It's a dual coil pickup so it's low noise, but designed to deliver more of a classic single-coil sound.

The single-cut body is classic Gretsch. With full, rounded curves and a depth of 44.45mm, it feels like there's plenty of guitar to hold onto. The Georgia green finish is quite a statement, both subtle and OTT at the same time. The catseye soundholes are shared with the three-pickup G5622T-CB, and hark back to models like the 6117 of the mid-'60s.

The body is made from a five-ply maple laminate, and the maple neck is topped with a buffed rosewood fingerboard, nicely bound so the edges feel smooth and comfortable. This ➔➔



Finish choices are red, black and this Georgia green



Swoopy 'catseye' soundholes were an old Gretsch feature, if not a common one

The Super HiLo'Tron pickup at the neck is a dual-coil pickup designed for low noise with a more single-coil sound

FACTFILE

GRETSCH G5620T CENTER-BLOCK

DESCRIPTION
Semi-acoustic electric guitar. Made in Korea
PRICE **£910.80**

BUILD **Twin-chambered semi-hollow body made from five-ply maple laminate. Maple set neck, 22-fret bound 12.5" radius rosewood fingerboard featuring Neo-Classic 'thumbnail' position markers. White body binding top and back, chrome hardware, Grover diecast tuners. Tunomatic bridge and Anchored Adjusto-Matic Bigsy-Licensed B70 Vibrato Tailpiece**
ELECTRICS **Black top Filter'Tron (bridge) and dual-coil Super HiLo'Tron (neck). Independent tone and volume controls, master volume, three-way selector**
LEFT-HANDERS
Unfortunately not
FINISH **Red, black and Georgia green**

SCALE LENGTH
625mm/24.6"
NECK WIDTH
Nut 43.6mm
12th fret 53.8mm
DEPTH OF NECK
First fret 21.2mm
Tenth fret 23mm
STRING SPACING
Nut 36.5mm
Bridge 52mm
ACTION AS SUPPLIED
12th fret treble 1.7mm
12th fret bass 2mm
WEIGHT
3.75kg/8.25gratchlbs

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UES135
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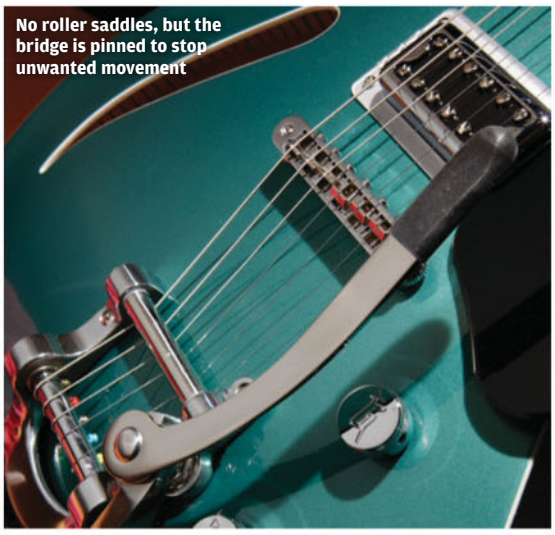
Epiphone
Swingster Black Royale
A flavour of G from the Big E, and this is a very nice price for a guitar with a pair of Filter'Tron style humbuckers and a vintage vibrato tailpiece. More Gretsch, less hi-gain
RRP **£540.32**

The neck pickup looks like an old single-coil HiLo'Tron, but it's a twin-coil 'voiced for sparkle'

The pickups are complementary: the Filter'Tron is middy and vintage and the HiLo'Tron is mid-scooped and piano-like

is a 22-fret guitar with the neck joining the body under the 14th fret. Upper octave access is therefore somewhat restricted, but you don't buy a Gretsch to widdle. Nor do you buy one for dive-bombing; the vintage style Bigsby is purely for gentle vibrato – especially as the guitar has a standard tunomatic.

Modern Gretsch guitars are not overloaded with switches but we still have an additional master volume as well as the independent tone and volume controls for each pickup and a three-way selector. To my mind, three volumes is asking for trouble; it's awfully easy to knock something and find yourself with a reduced output. The only real benefit of a master volume is that you could set an independent blend of bridge and neck pickup and then turn this up and down using the master. That's a pretty specialised option. It's certainly convenient having a volume control on the forward lower bout – why not simply do away with the other two?


No roller saddles, but the bridge is pinned to stop unwanted movement

Sounds

One of the things that has always defined the Gretsch sound is the company's own pickups, and I'm glad to say these carry on the tradition. Compared to the Gibson PAF or P90 they are relatively low in output, so to get the same sonic result you do need to turn up a bit. The benefit is quite apparent because there's a particular form of bright sparkle that's hard to get from any other guitar.

With a valve amp to add some warmth you arrive in classic pop territory – great for clever, articulate George Harrison chord combinations, country, or folk sounds great. Ragtime-influenced fingerpicking is delivered well, but for that super-smooth '60s Chet Atkins tone you'd need a Filter'Tron in the neck position.

The pickups are very complementary. The Filter'Tron is slightly more mid-forward and a little bit more vintage-sounding; the Super HiLo'Tron has an even tonal response with the hint of a mid-scoop and a pianoesque richness. I found myself favouring this over the slightly boxier Filter'Tron for rhythm.

Unfortunately the tone controls are ineffective; nothing happens until you reach 9/10th of the travel, at which point you're rewarded with an audible click and the guitar equivalent of budget vegetable soup. This could easily be sorted out post purchase (but at this price point you shouldn't have to), especially because the basic pickup sounds are really good.

As this G5620T-CB is directly marketed as a high-gain-friendly Gretsch, this is the obvious next step – and, yes, you can stomp on that pedal or twiddle the amp's gain control without fear of feedback (although, to be honest, feedback is unlikely to be a problem even with a fully hollow body, unless you're playing loud enough for the guitar and the amp to start interacting; if things start to squeal when you hit a pedal, you basically have a problem somewhere). Also, for some Gretsch players, feedback is their secret weapon: run a small amp very hot and then move to, or away from it to control the demon. Gretsches aren't naturally big on sustain, but master feedback and you can hang on a note all day. We had great fun with a 15W amp without deafening ourselves, so the design seems well tuned. Neither did the G5620T 'go off' if kept a fair distance from a cranked 100W rig, so if you really are living the life and want a semi-acoustic, this is one to check out.

Scaling back to concentrate on the sound, the guitar delivers very well. The driven Filter'Tron voice has a nice bark, great for chords and bluesy/rock leads; the Super HiLo'Tron delivers a surprising amount of bass thud, which is very pleasing. Even at high-gain settings this pickup conveys a generous amount of the guitar's natural acoustic tone so it feels really three-dimensional and alive.

Verdict

The G5620T Center-Block is a passport to the Gretsch semi-acoustic sound on a medium budget, and it's a very likeable guitar. With vintage and Custom Shop models costing way more, this guitar is ideal for someone who wants the cool style but not perhaps to the exclusion of other options. Even in this updated form the old-fashioned design comes with some built-in limitations – such as upper neck access – so unless you are a strictly vintage-genre player it may not meet all your needs. Is it truly a Gretsch for the hi-gain rocker? Well, you can certainly play it loud without feedback, so anyone who wants to take a Gretsch onto a big stage should check it out. However, if you want to explore territory much beyond, say, Dave Grohl's relationship to gain, a solid body would be the more practical option.

FINAL SCORE

GRETSCH G5620T CENTER-BLOCK	
Build Quality	**18**/20
Playability	**18**/20
Sound	**18**/20
Value for money	**17**/20
Vibe	**18**/20
TOTAL	**89%**

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PRS

SE Custom 24 7-String

It's taken PRS almost 30 years to generate a seven-string guitar, but they've done it – and what's more, it's part of the affordable SE series we love. Review by **Hayden Hewitt**

PRS guitars have, as we all know, been a dominant force in higher end guitars for more than a short while now. The Maryland powerhouse has crafted instruments ranging from 'a bit pricey' through to a 'Oh my God, I thought I'd get more than that for a kidney, how much for a spleen' kind of expensive. Alongside their mouthwatering USA-made instruments they have their Korean-built SE guitars which were certainly a game changer upon their launch and continue to represent a taste of PRS at a slightly more attainable price. It's into this range PRS have dropped their first-ever production seven-string.

The Custom 24 7-String unsurprisingly, appears very familiar. Looking for all the world like a slightly chubby six-string Custom model. PRS have done really rather well in preventing anything looking too out of balance with the addition of that extra string. If anything the wider board actually seems to suit the body shape convincingly and even the iconic headstock hasn't been altered to the point it draws your eye in a bad way. But we'd expect that from the folks at Maryland given their legendary attention to detail.

The body is mahogany with a maple top which then has a flamed maple veneer placed over the top, giving you something very pretty to look at without risking a nasty letter from your credit card company. Some may find such frippery unnecessary but the fact is that if you're after a PRS there's a very good chance you'll be wanting a little eye candy, and a veneer is the only way to make this happen. As with the rest of the SE Custom range you don't get an arched carved top here, but the contouring is deep and attractive, giving at least some three-dimensional aspect and avoiding proceedings getting altogether too slab-like.

Interestingly, the neck follows the PRS standard 25" scale – there aren't many seven-strings out there with a less-than-Fender scale – and features the rosewood with bird inlays you'd expect, but there is a deviance from the standard recipe here with the neck wood being maple rather than ➔

Body is mahogany, but this time the neck is maple

The tuners are the basic PRS non-locking types

The body is mahogany with maple on top plus a flamed maple veneer, and the scale length is the standard PRS 25"

FACTFILE

PRS SE CUSTOM 24 7-STRING

DESCRIPTION
Solidbody seven-string twin humbucking guitar. Made in Korea
PRICE **£675**

BUILD **Mahogany body, maple top with flame maple veneer, maple neck with rosewood fingerboard**
ELECTRICS **SE HFS bridge pickup, SE Vintage Bass neck pickup, push/pull coil tap on tone pot, three-way pickup selector switch**
LEFT-HANDERS **No**
FINISH **Amethyst, black, vintage sunburst**

SCALE LENGTH
635mm/25"
NECK WIDTH
Nut 48mm
12th fret 60mm
DEPTH OF NECK
First fret 17mm
Tenth fret 19mm
STRING SPACING
Nut 41mm
Bridge 63mm
ACTION AS SUPPLIED
12th fret treble 2.5mm
12th fret bass 3mm
WEIGHT **3.6kg**

CONTACT
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RRP **£2051**

Ibanez
UV70P
It could be argued that the Steve Vai Universe kickstarted mainstream interest in seven-string guitars. This more affordable Universe still allows you to craft your technicolour soundscapes
RRP **£1049**

Two-octave rosewood fingerboard with the classic PRS bird inlays

The versatile Custom 7 is best suited for those simply seeking extra range rather than a drop-tuned percussive beast

mahogany. The neck carve is of the wide/thin variety and we have to give kudos to PRS here because the Custom 7 is one of the least intrusive necks we've tried, if you're the sort of person who plays six-string necks more often.

Up on the headstock you will find some PRS-designed tuners and this is the one thing we'd gladly trade up for the US locking style, even at a small price increase. It's not that the SE tuners are terrible, far from it – they just don't exude the same sort of quality as the rest of the guitar, which is a real shame. Bridge-wise we have to forgo a vibrato bridge for a string-through model. Again, most folks might love this, but we do like a vibrato option on a seven-string.

As ever, the build quality of the SE range doesn't fail to deliver. Since they first arrived they've offered up a normally faultless build and feel for the price, and the Custom is definitely no exception. And this time there's not really any of that 'settled for second best' feel because you couldn't quite stretch to the US version, because there simply isn't one. Win win.

Sounds

If really tight, brutal, djent-style riffage is your bag then the supplied pickups might not really give you what you're looking for. Piling on the gain sees the bridge and, to a greater extent, the neck pickup losing quite a bit of clarity. Think grunge, then, rather than pinpoint precision. Choosing a clean setting presents some genuinely toothsome sounds, however. From funky little licks (particularly with the coil tap engaged) through to deep jazz tones – especially when you bring the low B into play to extend your chords – it all makes perfect sense. Dialing in a more hard rock tone suits this guitar too, and it handles itself with distinction with crisp chords and lush neck pickup noodlings. Overdriven tones with the coil tap engaged also come across really well and that low B, with a decent crunch, adds a massive dimension to what might otherwise sound pretty standard. The SE Vintage Bass in the neck does deserve a little more attention here as well as it manages to retain quite a bit of 'wood' when you're thumping around the lower end of the neck but still allows for plummy, fluid tones when you get adventurous.

So while you can't get that super-tight, detuned tone going on, the Custom 7 is still capable of making some aggressive noises with aplomb. It's all just a little more sledgehammer than scalpel, which is certainly no bad thing, and it sets the Custom 7 apart from where many other extended range guitars appear to be heading.

Verdict

Overall this PRS seven-string delivers almost exactly what you'd expect – excellent build quality, that honed PRS feel ensuring nothing is rude or out of place, and it genuinely looks the part. As ever, though, there could be a fly in the ointment. For some players the lack of a super-tight output from the guitar might not be an issue, but those amongst you who are dedicated internetists (that's the scientific term) might have noticed that not many of the people clamouring for a PRS seven-string over the years appear to be the sort of folks who enjoy music of the more brutal variety. As was mentioned earlier this guitar can certainly present a fair amount of aggro but to our ears that isn't where its strengths shine, given the pickups and the lack of an extended scale length. The Custom 7 displays an impressive versatility and is best suited to the player who wants that extra string because of the options it offers, rather than someone seeking a drop G tuned percussive beast for their technical death metal outfit.

Electronics include a coil-tap on the tone control

Fixed bridge – there's no vibrato option

FINAL SCORE

PRS SE CUSTOM 24 7 STRING	
Build Quality	**17**/20
Playability	**18**/20
Sound	**17**/20
Value for money	**13**/20
Vibe	**18**/20
TOTAL	**83%**

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TONE KING
Sky King

If you love Tone King amps but can't decide which one to buy, the Sky King does the lot – with extra output stage control, state of the art power-scaling and a fine reverb and tremolo too. Review by **Huw Price**

Tone King's first amp, the Imperial, was designed to deliver the raw tones and spongy feel of '50s and early '60s Fenders, while lower-powered tweeds and Supro amps inspired the later Falcon model. With an unconventional ultralinear output stage, cathode biasing and zero negative feedback, the Falcon's overdrive tone was designed to be sweeter, smoother and more rounded; thanks to its Pentode/Ultralinear switch, the Sky King promises to do both.

With a pair of 6L6 power valves producing 35W, the Sky King is also the more powerful amp, and any concerns that we wouldn't be able to drive it hard enough were dispelled by the built-in power attenuation. Tone King makes a standalone attenuator called the Iron Man – a transformer device that presents a resistor-less reactive load – and the Sky King has a built-in Iron Man attenuator with independent controls for both channels.

A mammoth 5U4G tube rectifies the power, with four 12AX7s and a 12AT7 handling pre-amplification, tremolo and reverb duties. The open-back pine cabinet houses a single 12" Celestion G12M65 Creamback speaker and the control panel is conveniently located at the front. The circuitry is handwired and the overall finish and build quality corresponds with our expectations of a premium American amplifier.

A huge 5U4G tube rectifies the power while there's two 6L6GC output valves

The reverb isn't switchable, but the channels and the tremolo are

Sounds

Rhythm is the designated clean channel, and with the attenuator switched out it's easy to discern the effect of the Pentode/Ultralinear switch. In pentode mode the tone sparkles and chimes, with the scooped mids and big lows we'd associate with medium-power blackface amps. Ultralinear lowers the output level while softening the treble and adding girth to the midrange. The volume control is labelled from 1 to 9, and pentode mode stays clean up to number 5 or 6 – depending on whether you're using single coils or humbuckers. Although clear and bright, the clean tone is touch-sensitive and devoid of spikiness. Above 6 the overdrive increases exponentially, with the midrange filling out and becoming more compressed. At full tilt the Tone King is fairly loud, but notching the attenuator by one increment brings things ➔

FACTFILE
TONE KING SKY KING

DESCRIPTION **Twin-channel 35W handwired valve combo with 1x12" Celestion G12M65 Creamback speaker, spring reverb, tremolo and Ironman attenuator. Made in the USA**
PRICE **£2449**

CONTROLS **Ch1: Volume, Tone, Mid-Bite. Ch2: Volume, Treble, Bass, Reverb, Intensity & Speed (both channels), Pentode/Ultralinear switch, channel switch, 4/8 Ohm impedance switch, individual channel attenuator switches**
COLOURS **Black, brown or cream**
DIMENSIONS **24" wide, 12" deep, 18" high**
WEIGHT **18.2kg/40lbs**

CONTACT **Coda Music**
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Another handwired US amp with a strong blackface Fender influence. Power is 40W but it can be switched to fixed bias (22W) and cathode bias (18W). The V6 has spring reverb, and Channel 2 is voiced for heavy overdrive
RRP **£2899**

Fender
Vibro-King 20th Anniversary
A 60W combo with three Jensen P10R speakers, Pre-Gain, '63-style reverb, dwell with Mix, Tone and Fat switch, vibrato, effects loop and retro brown tolex
RRP **£2899**

Lazy J
40
The looks are tweedy but this two-channel 40W combo comes with optional valve-driven reverb and bias tremolo modules, a sensitivity control and tweed/blackface switching.
RRP **£2099 (with reverb & tremolo)**

With the exception of Ch1's Mid-Bite knob, the Sky King controls are blackface-simple

Pentode mode covers tweed, blackface and Marshall sounds, while Ultralinear opens up another world of voicings

down to a comfortable pub gig level with no diminution of sound quality.

The Ultralinear setting provides a much chewier and looser playing experience. In this regard it's tweed-like, but the tone is smoother and lacks the raw edge of a true tweed. This is no bad thing, and it's a superb basic tone that you can control with your guitar volume and shape with pedals.

The Lead channel certainly doesn't concern itself with pseudo-clean tones. Some overdrive is present, even with the volume control set low, and it builds gradually from there. The tweedy rawness that was absent from the Rhythm channel can be found here in spades... so whether you prefer your overdrive biting and crunchy or buttery smooth, the Sky King has it covered.

The versatility comes from the interaction of the Mid-Bite and the Tone. For such a simple set of controls to be effective, an amp must have a pretty fine sound to start with. We think the Treble and Bass are voiced just right, and the two tone shapers simply emphasise and de-emphasise various shades of the Sky King's core sound.

The Mid-Bite takes the midrange from scooped to full, and with Volume and Tone set high, the sound takes on a more contemporary rock edge. The in between settings run the gamut of vintage-style voicings, from upper midrange bite to bluesy and boxy mid-heavy grind. Even at full volume the Sky King holds together really well, and the tonal characteristics of all our test guitars cut through.

Unlike some supposed 'lead' channels, this one genuinely provides enough gain and sustain to play solos without the need for stompbox overdrive or compression. Again Pentode mode is snappier and edgier, but Ultralinear has the softer and saggier lows that so many players enjoy from vintage amps. You can even combine tweedy bass with a Vox-like midrange, and we had a lot of fun dialling in early Led Zeppelin tones with a Tele and a Les Paul.

Reverb and tremolo work on both channels, and a dual footswitch is provided for trem and channel switching. The reverb is deep and three-dimensional with a very useable level control. Although the tremolo doesn't pulsate as quickly as some, it sounds strong and with the reverb it's a perfect match for retro style fun.

Pentode/Ultralinear switch and Iron Man attenuator live around the back

Speaker is a single 12" Celestion G12M65 Creamback

Verdict

The Sky King is almost like a collection of fantastic classic amps loaded into a single cabinet and it's remarkable how such versatility can be achieved with such simple controls. Pentode mode covers everything from '50s Fender to early Marshall via the blackface era, while Ultralinear opens up another world of dynamic response and tone voicings. When you factor in a spring reverb that can be subtle or cavernously intense, a tremolo that you can feel inside your chest and an award-winning attenuator that would cost around £650 as a stand-alone unit, the Tone King Sky King easily justifies its boutique status – and price tag.

FINAL SCORE

TONE KING SKY KING	
Build Quality	**19**/20
Versatility	**19**/20
Sound	**19**/20
Value for money	**17**/20
Vibe	**18**/20
TOTAL	**92%**

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PEAVEY

ValveKing 20MH Micro Head & ValveKing 50 combo

Peavey gets down and dirty with updates on the ValveKing series that include a brand-new super-compact 20W amp and an updated 50W combo. Review by **Richard Purvis**

Peavey is a big company. Maybe not as big as Coca-Cola, but definitely bigger than Kennedy's fish and chip shop in Streatham. In terms of amplifiers alone, the current catalogue takes in such a wide range of styles and budgets – from bedroom modelling amps to high-gain shredding stacks, and even the odd pedal steel combo – that you never quite know what's coming along next. That's especially true because Peavey has never been afraid to lob one or two quirky ideas into the mix... and as we'll soon see, there are a couple of those in store with today's duo of amps from the revamped ValveKing line: a 20W 'lunchbox' model and a 50W 1x12" combo, each with two channels and an abundance of knobs to twiddle.

ValveKing 20MH

Eight years after the launch of the industry-changing Orange Tiny Terror, it's probably about time Peavey joined the lunchbox revolution. The 'MH' stands for 'micro head' and this entirely new amp is one your sickly niece would not struggle to throw up the stairs. But while the dimensions are small, the feature count isn't. As well as switchable clean and dirty channels it has a three-band EQ and digital reverb, plus a selectable gain boost and an intriguing little something called Vari-Class. On the back panel there's more: power scaling, a headphone output and an FX loop, plus mic-emulating DI and USB outputs. Like many of its type it's powered by a pair of EL84s, and this brings us to the 20MH's final trick: two green LEDs just above the jewel light. They're status indicators for the output valves, and if one turns red you know you have an unhappy tube to deal with.

The ValveKing 20MH has clean and dirty channels, digital reverb and gain boost and can morph from Class A to Class AB

Clearly the engineering challenge here has been to get all of that technology into a head that's small enough to qualify as 'micro'. The inside of the amp is bewilderingly cramped, with pretty much everything mounted on one large PCB (including the valve bases); some of the components are so tiny they'd give the average amp tech an instant mental breakdown. Still, overall it looks and feels

↦

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FACTFILE
VALVEKING 20MH HEAD

DESCRIPTION
Two-channel 20W head with 3 x ECC83 and 2 x EL84 valves. Made in China
PRICE **£459**

FRONT PANEL **Clean Volume, Lead Gain; Gain Boost and Channel Select push-buttons; Bass, Mid, Treble, Reverb, Vari-Class, Master Volume; Standby and On/Off switches**
REAR PANEL **One speaker output with 20W/5W/1W switch and 16/8 Ohm impedance selector; Mic-simulated DI and headphone outputs with speaker mute and earth lift switches; FX loop send and return; Footswitch inputs for channel/boost and reverb/loop bypass; USB recording output**
DIMENSIONS
36cm wide, 19cm high, 20cm deep
WEIGHT **7kg/15.4lbs**

CONTACT **Peavey Europe**
01536 461234
www.peavey.com

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Orange
Dark Terror
Monstrously good high-gain variant on the micro-amp that started it all, with just Volume and Gain knobs plus an inspired Shape control to play with
RRP **£399**

Mesa Boogie
Mini Rectifier
An impressive effort to cram all of Mesa's much-admired rock tone into a tiny box, with plenty of tonal tweakery on tap
RRP **£1099**

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FACTFILE

VALVEKING 50 COMBO

DESCRIPTION **50W 1x12" combo with 3 x ECC83 and 2 x 6L6 valves (switchable to EL34s), Peavey ValveKing speaker. Made in China**
PRICE **£669**

FRONT PANEL **High and low inputs; Clean channel Volume, Bass, Mid and Treble plus Bright and Channel Select push-buttons; Lead channel Gain, Volume, Bass, Mid and Treble plus Boost and Gain push-buttons; Reverb, Damping and Vari-Class; Standby and On/Off switches**
REAR PANEL **Two speaker outputs with 50W/12W/2W switch and 16/8/4 Ohm impedance selector; Mic-simulated DI output with speaker mute and earth lift switches; FX loop send and return; Footswitch inputs for channel/boost and reverb/loop bypass; USB recording output**
DIMENSIONS **56cm wide, 52cm high, 26cm deep**
WEIGHT **18kg/39.6lbs**

CONTACT **Peavey Europe 01536 461234 www.peavey.com**

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Orange
Rockerverb 50 MkII 1x12
A hefty lump of EL34-driven retro rock for those unwilling to compromise on tone or price
RRP **£1,428**

solid enough, although the white knobs – which can only be described as squished chickenheads – are mighty close together and turn with virtually no resistance, making it very easy to nudge one around a notch or two while trying to adjust its neighbour.

Sound

So where does this new ValveKing model fit into the Peavey narrative? Well, it's not as aggressively styled as some of the properly satanic offerings that have followed on from the company's collaboration with Eddie Van Halen on the 5150, so we should perhaps be anticipating some decent tones on the clean channel here.

We get them, to an extent. Up to about 4 on the Volume control with single-coils it's a big, well-balanced sound with plenty of thump in the bottom end. The treble is not exactly sparkly, and with humbuckers in particular there's a clanky character that no amount of EQ tweaking (or cab changing) will level out completely, but it's useable. Will this channel serve up some crunch if we crank it? Hmm, not really. You can bring on a bit of grit in the top half of the dial and lead lines will thicken accordingly, but chords now tend to get mushy and flappy through even the toughest of speakers.

Not a bad start, all in all, but we'd better get straight to the heavy stuff. This doesn't take long: even with Gain set down in the low numbers the second channel is most definitely designated 'rock only'. It's angry and raspy – though tasteful lead players will be able to coax smoother tones out of it if they really want to – and winding up the gain just winds up the righteousness. Power chords from a bridge humbucker growl with real authority, and it's worth getting hold of a double footswitch so you can also engage the gain boost for solos without turning your back on the slavering mob.

The power scaling works well enough, taking the output level down to 5W or 1W without totally destroying the tone, but far more interesting is this Vari-Class business. The dial says AB at one end and A at the other, so what does it actually do? According to Peavey, turning the knob towards Class A gradually takes one of the power valves out of the circuit, while increasing the gain at the phase inverter stage to compensate; all the way round, you've effectively got a single-ended amp. The difference is subtle but it's one that connoisseur tonehounds will really appreciate because it does basically turn the 20MH into a blending of two similar but quite distinct amplifiers: the Class AB version is full-on, strident and fundamentally Marshall-like; the Class A version has a softer, sweeter top end and a more Vox-like grain to the overdrive. We've really no right to expect this level of close-up control from a lunchbox amp.

FINAL SCORE

VALVEKING 20MH HEAD	
Build Quality	**17**/20
Versatility	**19**/20
Sound	**17**/20
Value for money	**17**/20
Looks	**17**/20
TOTAL	**87%**

The ValveKing 50 is an evolution of the old 112, with valve status LEDs, the Vari-Class control and a Damping knob

There's a good level of connectivity, including a mic-simulated recording out

ValveKing 50

This one's not so much a new model as an evolution of the old ValveKing 112, though it's soon clear that the changes have gone far deeper than the colour of the control knobs. Most obviously, glowing like the green eyes of an alien cockroach, we've got those two LEDs for checking on the status of the output valves; there's also a Vari-Class control (which was present, but labelled Texture, on the back panel of the 112) and a Damping knob, which appears ➔

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Control layout on both amps is clear but the knobs are tightly packed together

Both these ValveKings can punch out excellent rock tones, but the coolest things are the added features

to be a development of the simple on/off Resonance switch also hidden on the back of the old version. This can only be a control for the negative feedback loop – something that's started to show up on some very expensive boutique amplifiers recently. Another feature for the tonehounds?

The speaker is Peavey-branded and this time the power's coming from a pair of 6L6s. These can be switched out for EL34s if you want a more British vibe, though this will require a rebias. It's worth noting that the output tubes are protected by a sturdy black cage, held in place by four fiddly screws (also black), so you'll be praying the warning LEDs never ask you to make that valve change on a darkened stage. The 50-watter's internal layout is much more spacious than that of the 20MH, though again we find a lot of titchy components and virtually everything is mounted to one giant PCB.

The bigger amp's front control panel offers separate three-band EQ sections and individual volume controls for each channel, and some more push-buttons – most notably, on the dirty channel, a gain boost and a separate level boost. Cleverly, if you have a double footswitch, with one switch used to hop between channels, the other will engage whichever one of these two buttons you've opted to push in beforehand – a brilliant piece of extra versatility.

The back panel is, for the most part, similar to that of the 50's little brother, with FX loop sockets, mic-emulated DI and USB outputs, and power scaling from 50W down to 12W or 2W. We're too grown-up for headphone outputs now.

Sound

As with the 20MH, the clean tones here are not trouser-floodingly exciting but they have plenty of depth, and the addition of a Bright switch means humbuckers don't have to get lost in the flubby stuff. Of course this is a much louder amp and the 6L6s do offer a hint of blackface Fender chime, but again, crank the clean volume and you'll quickly find some unpalatable gurgliness creeping into the lower register. It's safe to say fans of bluesy crunch can give both these amps a miss.

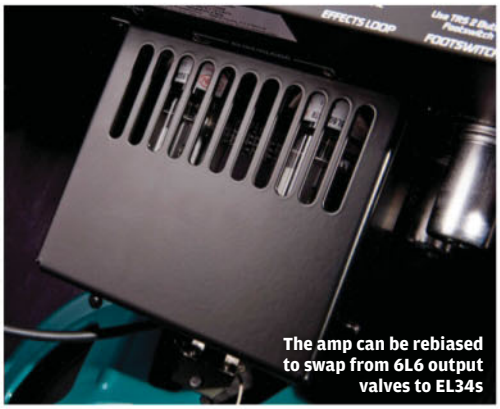
Tattoo-necked grandparent-worriers, however, should stay around for a bit, because the ValveKing 50 rocks even harder than the 20MH. Well, it rocks louder anyway – sound-wise it's pretty similar, but now it's coming at you in barrels instead of pint glasses. Having separate gain and volume controls on this channel makes it easy to match output levels with your clean sound, and you can dial in as much or as little filth as you require. The boost buttons are nicely judged to provide just the right amount of extra fizz or punch on top of that, and all you need to do now is tailor that cathedral-shaking voice with the Vari-Class and Damping controls. Understandably, these are more effective with the gain at moderate levels. It's likely that most players will leave the latter at maximum looseness for most of the time, but a twist towards the tight end of the dial can be handy for reining in both bloomy bottom and squealy top; some guitars will get on better with this feature than others.

By the way, the mic-emulated DI sounds on both amps are pretty good, while the digital reverb is not fantastic but will do the job if you don't mind it swirling around for quite a long time even at low levels.

Verdict

Both these ValveKings are capable of punching out excellent rock tones, but the coolest things are the added features. We can't say too much about the valve-monitoring lights because, as our amps were both working fine, they were never put to the test; but while some might be nonplussed by the subtle effects of the Vari-Class and Damping controls, those with better-educated ears may be left wondering why all amps don't have them.

Standard 12" speaker works well: the impedance can be switched for extension cabs



The amp can be rebiased to swap from 6L6 output valves to EL34s

FINAL SCORE	
VALVEKING 50 COMBO	
Build Quality	**17**/20
Versatility	**20**/20
Sound	**17**/20
Value for money	**17**/20
Looks	**17**/20
TOTAL	**88%**

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ZOOM
G1Xon

If it comes down to a choice between a tank of petrol and a Zoom multi-FX with looper and a tuner, the winner is obvious. Review by **Marcus Leadley**

In a world where you can easily spend £200 on a single-use boutique stompbox, the idea that you can get pretty well every available guitar effect from a single unit costing a third of this sounds insane. Yet Zoom has gone and done it – and it's not the first time the company has offered such extraordinary value for money. What's even more surprising is the fact that the basic G1X without the expression pedal and its related effects is a mere £49. Now, budget multi-FX are generally aimed at the beginner's market where the promise of more for less has obvious appeal. However, things have kind of reached the point where you no longer have to compromise completely on sound quality. Add to this the fact that years of development has ironed out the kinks when it comes to internal routing, flexibility and simple interface design, and a little box like this can be very handy if you're a seasoned pro.

So what do you get for your money? You get 58 effects: noise gate, graphic EQ, distortion, booster, tremolo, chorus, pitch shift, ring modulator, delay and reverb – and 22 amp simulations. Many are modelled on famous name pedals, and each is a separate stompbox-style module. You can tweak parameters using virtual knobs and switches accessed using a few basic key combinations. You can chain up to five effects together – or four plus an amp simulator – in any order you like, and swap them around to change how they interact. For convenience and demo purposes the unit comes stuffed with preset patches. There are 10 banks (A-J) each capable of holding 10 patches; any and all of these can be overwritten and you can move patches about to fully

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customise your new best friend. Oh, and the unit has a built-in looper with a maximum 30-second recording time as well as the ability to overdub countless times using different patches. There are 68 rhythm patterns to play along with. And there's a tuner that can be set for five open tunings as well as standard. It's quite an impressive list.

The G1Xon's appearance is utilitarian and businesslike. The black and dark grey plastics have a heavy duty feel to them and the unit has a metal baseplate. All knobs and buttons are bright blue so they should be easy to see, even on a dark stage.

Connectivity is basic; this is a mono-in/mono-out unit (the out doubles as a headphone socket), so no fancy stereo effects. You can get an optional power adaptor but Zoom claim you can get 20 hours out of a set of four alkaline cells – so off to the pound shop. There's an auxiliary input so you can play along to an iPod or similar. There's a USB port too, but it's only for firmware updating.

To move from patch to patch you use the foot pedals, which will take you up or down through the banks. To bypass the unit altogether, press both simultaneously; this also drops you straight into tuner mode, which is very useful, but you can also toggle through the banks using the up/down cursor keys. There's a preselect mode that lets you set up a second patch while continuing to play the first... very handy for live playing.

The Menu button takes you to the window where you set the master volume output and other macro settings. Here you need to decide whether you want the unit to save automatically or manually – both approaches have their supporters. All you need to do to change module settings is press Enter, select your chosen module using the rotary control, and then press Enter again to reveal the settings. Move through them using the Cursor keys and press Enter again to select. There's a separate button to toggle between the Looper and the Rhythm functions. If you get confused at any point, simply press Home, which takes you back to the main window of the patch selected.

Simple input, output/phones socket, and a USB port for updates

SOUNDS

Inevitably the G1Xon does sound like a multi-FX processor, so straight out of the box there are plenty of massive distortion sounds with too much delay and plenty of funky clean sounds with too much chorus – and, yes, delay – and lots of whacked-out special effects.

Between these extremes, though, are some great basic guitar patches that showcase the real potential of the unit. If you have a nice-sounding amp you'll probably want to turn the amp sims off and just use the FX potential. Alternatively, this little box will drive a clean power amp very effectively. Amp sims are also very useful for computer recording and these sound great. Spend more money if you want enhanced realism and interchangeable cab sims, but these models capture the spirit of the amps they seek to emulate.

All the effect modules do exactly what they say they will, and the degree of editability is good. In bypass mode the unit does suck a bit of life out of the basic guitar/amp sound so you're better off either running it thought a switchable effects loop or setting up an A/B box and using two amp inputs if you have them. The expression pedal is a useful addition, and once again you have a fair degree of control over the parameters. The Rhythm function offers a surprisingly wide range of basic patterns covering most styles from rock though country, swing, jazz, funk and punk. You can't chain patterns to make song structures, but the basic sounds are good as actual drum samples have been used. There are a couple of basic metronome settings to help you do your homework. The Looper is very simple to operate and you can record with, or without, the drum track, and if you record with Rhythm on to get the timing right you can subsequently turn it off if you like the result enough to transfer it to a computer to work with. It's a great way to generate riff and song ideas.

VERDICT

This super-affordable, super-likeable little multi-FX would be great for a beginner or a more serious player who needs a few multi-style sounds for a covers gig but doesn't want to throw too much cash at it. It's also a great little gadget for practicing and songwriting. The format and editing controls are nice and simple; true, the back-lit screen is pretty small, but most will find it adequate. The G1Xon also seems rugged enough to last – but don't drop a cab on it and expect it to survive. If you don't need a pedal wah or Whammy-style pitch shifter, go for the basic G1X and save another £20. Bargain!

FINAL SCORE

ZOOM G1XON	
Build Quality	**17**/20
Versatility	**19**/20
Sound	**17**/20
Value for money	**18**/20
Vibe	**17**/20
TOTAL	**88%**

FACTFILE

Zoom G1Xon multi-FX processor

DESCRIPTION **Multi-FX processor. Made in Japan, assembled in China**
RRP **£69**

FEATURES **11 dynamic/filter effects; 12 overdrive/distortion effects; 22 amp models; 16 modulation effects; 14 delay/reverbs; five pedal effects; 30 second looper; built in tuner; rhythm pattern player with 68 preloaded groves, expression pedal**

CONNECTIONS **Mono Input/Output (doubles as a headphone socket), Aux Input, 9v DC port, USB port**

CONTROLS **Home, Enter, Menu, Rhythm/Looper, plus four cursor keys and rotary parameter adjuster**

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MXR
Custom Shop Phase 99

Love phasing? Then why limit yourself to just one when MXR offers two, all crammed into a weeny box. Review by **Marcus Leadley**

The original Phase 90 was perhaps the pedal that really announced MXR to the world in the mid-'70s – and its best salesman was none other than Eddie Van Halen, although Brian May was no slouch in the phaser department either. It's one of the classic swooshy pedals of the era, adding tonal movement to distorted rhythm and lead playing as well as funking up clean sounds, and it endured the onslaught of punk to become a new wave sound that has survived the vagaries of fashion better, some would say, than chorus. The Phase 90's sweeping tone was created by splitting the signal in two, filtering one side and letting frequency-dependent phase cancellation work its magic. Changing the mix ratio changes the speed of the modulation, and that's all there was to the orange Phase 90: one knob and a footswitch.

The MXR Custom Shop Phase 99 takes phasing to a whole new level, for this little box contains not one but two phaser circuits. There are two rotary speed controls and three buttons that let you toggle between series/parallel mode and modern/vintage tone and switch the phaser sync on and off.

There are also two dip switches inside the unit, and this is where things get a little confusing. The manual says to leave SW5 alone as it does nothing; curious, but maybe there's a mod in the pipeline. With SW6 down (the factory default) you get the output of both phasers for both series and parallel modes presented at OUT 1, creating a mix for basic mono guitar playing. Plug a second amp into OUT 2 and select Series mode, and the output of each phaser is sent to a separate out, and you can independently control the speed. If you select parallel mode instead, both outputs are sent a blend of both phasers. If you are playing in mono, moving SW6 to its 'up' position when in parallel mode means you're only using one phase circuit – this gives you the most basic of phase tones – and if you press the vintage switch you basically have the softer, early Phase 90 sound. Switching to series mode gives you a blend again.

Practically, this madness translates into the following: if you just plug your guitar direct into an amp, set the dip switch 'up' if you want a single, classic phaser tone and a second dual phaser sound. If you want two dual phaser sounds, push the switch down. If you use a stereo rig, leave the switch down – then you get either two independent phasers or a blended output.

Sounds

Despite the complexity there's no getting away from the fact that the Phase 99 sounds like a phaser, and it's full of those familiar great sounds. Beyond the basics you can sculpt all manner of subtle phase shades. Syncing the phasers creates depth and richness, while controlling the speed of the two units independently lets you programme all sorts of shakes, wiggles and implied rhythms into your sound – both subtle and crazy. Working with the unit in stereo creates a whole new palate of spatial effects, but these are quite difficult to control; what you hear partly depends on where you stand in relation to your amps. The vintage control appears to mute the top end of the signal and accentuate the mid spectrum, and its effect is fairly consistent across all settings.

Verdict

The Phase 99 is a well-made, low-noise, flexible pedal – ideal if you're planning to make phasing a key element of your sound or want a wide range of options to play with. If you just want a retro-sounding phaser, something much simpler will be adequate. Phasers are generally at their best when used in moderation; the Phase 99 can be a very subtle tool and the level of control of fine detail is really impressive.

FINAL SCORE

MXR CUSTOM SHOP PHASE 99	
Build Quality	**18**/20
Versatility	**19**/20
Sound	**18**/20
Value for money	**18**/20
Vibe	**17**/20
TOTAL	**90%**

FACTFILE
MXR Custom Shop Phase 99

SPECS **Dual phaser pedal, mono input, mono or dual output. Made in USA**
RRP **£169**

CONTROLS
Speed (x 2), Parallel/Series, Vintage, Sync

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SEAGULL

Walnut Mini Jumbo Isys T

If North American build, a solid sitka top and Adirondack bracing sound like high-end specs then the price of this no-frills Seagull will make your eyebrows shoot skywards. Review by **Huw Price**

To describe the appointments of the Seagull Walnut Mini Jumbo as Spartan might be understating it. This guitar is almost brutally stripped back, having no body binding whatsoever, no inlay, and a satin finish so thin that you might wonder if it's even there at all. Nevertheless, the Mini Jumbo feels solid and the overall look is not without aesthetic appeal.

Hailing from Seagull's affordable new Walnut series, it shares the other models' unusual rosette decoration. True to its Canadian heritage this constitutes a handwriting style script in both English and French reading 'Handcrafted in the village of Princeville Quebec Canada', and it appears to be branded onto the solid spruce top.

Although described as 'mini', the Seagull's jumbo body is not insubstantial. It measures 16" across the lower bout and 11.5" across the upper, which is only about an inch smaller than a Gibson J-200 and almost on a par with a Lowden O style.

The absence of binding makes it easy to tell that the back and sides are made from a three-layer laminate with locally-sourced Canadian walnut. Since the middle layer is lighter in colour, it creates a faux binding effect that enhances the tight curves of the body.

Laminated walnut body and maple neck with rosewood cap

Headstock is scarf-jointed for extra strength

This guitar is brutally stripped back, with no binding, no inlay and a satin finish so thin you wonder if it's there

It's hard to move in Canada without bumping into maple, so it's the logical choice for the neck. Stacked at the heel and scarf-jointed at the headstock, there's even a hint of flame when the light catches it just right. We think the rosewood heel cap looks a bit incongruous, but the neck joint – bolted on and then glued – seems solid and the tiny gaps just about pass the Rizla test.

Seagull's tapered headstock is a company feature. Although not to everybody's taste, it's a sleek look and it serves a practical purpose by allowing the strings to reach the tuner posts without deviating too far from a straight path. The tuners themselves are chrome Seagull-branded diecast units with small oval buttons. They look cooler from the front than from the back but they ➔➔

FACTFILE

Seagull Walnut Mini Jumbo Isys T

DESCRIPTION **Mini jumbo-sized electro-acoustic. Made in Canada**
PRICE **£399, or £479 with pickup**

BUILD **Solid spruce top with laminated walnut back and sides, maple neck, rosewood fingerboard, chrome diecast tuners, Fishman Isys + pickup system**
LEFT-HANDERS **No**
FINISH **Satin**

SCALE LENGTH
650mm/25.6"
NECK WIDTH
Nut 43mm
12th fret 54mm
DEPTH OF NECK
First fret 19mm
Ninth fret 22mm
STRING SPACING
Nut 35.5mm
Bridge 54mm
ACTION AS SUPPLIED
12th fret treble 2mm
12th fret bass 3mm
WEIGHT **2kg/4.4lb**

CONTACT **440 Distribution**
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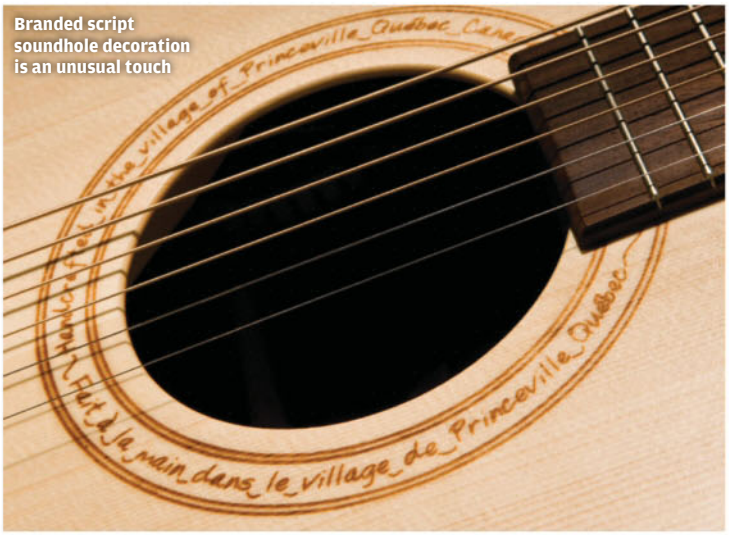
A simple, rotund jumbo with a solid spruce top, flame maple back and sides, maple neck, a rosewood board, abalone rosette and bone nut
RRP **£272**

Yamaha
LS6
As reliable and useful as ever, this Yammy has a solid Engelmann top, rosewood back and sides, a mahogany/rosewood neck, ebony fretboard, 20 frets, gold-plated open gear tuners, high gloss finish, and a gig bag
RRP **£438**

Takamine
GJ72CE-NAT
Cutaway jumbo with solid spruce top, figured maple back and sides, maple neck, bound rosewood fretboard, undersaddle pickup, TP-40D preamp with tuner, abalone rosette, gold hardware and a gloss finish
RRP **£408**



Branded script soundhole decoration is an unusual touch

Walnut headstock facing and a Tusq nut

feel accurate and precise. Phosphor bronze strings pass over the nut, travel along a rosewood fingerboard and terminate at a rosewood bridge with a compensated saddle. Both the nut and saddle are Tusq.

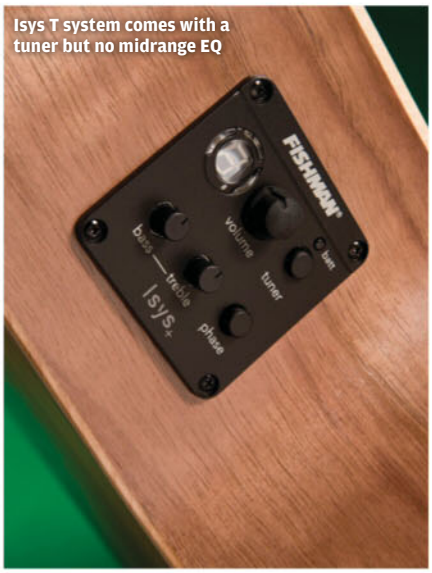
A Fishman Isys T pickup control module is side mounted on the upper bout. In addition to a built-in tuner there are Volume, Bass and Treble controls plus a phase switch and a battery level indicator. The pickup itself is an undersaddle piezo.

Sound

There are occasions when a guitar exceeds expectations, and this happens to be one of them. Big-bodied acoustics can sound boomy but the Mini Jumbo's bass is ample and well defined. We wouldn't describe it as a bright-sounding guitar, but there is a pleasing amount of chime. Above all the Mini Jumbo's defining sonic characteristic is provided by warm woodiness of the midrange. What really sets the Mini Jumbo apart is the way it responds so freely to playing touch. It certainly doesn't need a strong right arm attack to get the top moving, and this makes it a dynamic strummer as well as an expressive fingerpicker. Dropped tunings are handled with ease, low strings retaining weight and definition along with excellent string separation.

The back and sides are laminated, but the Mini Jumbo's response is closer to what we would expect from an all-solid instrument. It even sounds like a walnut guitar, running a middle line between the earthiness of mahogany and the harmonic complexity of rosewood.

The Mini Jumbo responds freely to the touch, making it a dynamic strummer and an expressive fingerpicker



Isys T system comes with a tuner but no midrange EQ

Canadian sitka spruce top and a rosewood bridge

Although there's no mistaking the piezo pickup, it's easy to dial in pleasing tones using the Bass and Treble controls and the amplified sound bears more than a passing resemblance to the acoustic tone. The phase switch is a welcome addition and, although it's not super-accurate, the tuner is a bonus. Factor in a modern, fairly flat 'C' neck profile with a medium/low action and the Mini Jumbo is a real player's guitar.

Verdict

To hit this low price Seagull has cut back on the cosmetics, but it's easy enough to live without the body binding and fancy inlays. As for the finish, no attempt has been made to grain-fill, but somehow it made us feel more connected with this guitar. The fretwork is excellent and even the pickup system impresses. At this end of the market you might expect indifferent acoustic tone with a decent enough pickup system, or vice versa, but the Mini Jumbo is just as satisfying to play plugged in as unplugged. Even so, some customers might consider the acoustic-only version with a view to installing a pickup system of their choice at a later date. In all other respects this Seagull is an honest, no-frills instrument that has been built to last a lifetime. Ultimately, tone and playability, not trimmings, are the things that matter – and the Mini Jumbo nails them both.

FINAL SCORE

SEAGULL WALNUT MINI JUMBO ISYS T	
Build Quality	**16**/20
Playability	**17**/20
Sound	**18**/20
Value for money	**18**/20
Looks	**18**/20
TOTAL	**87%**

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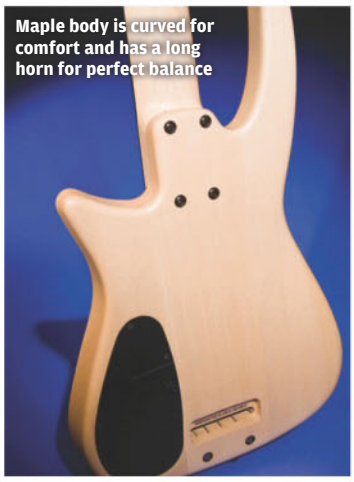
NS
CR5 Radius Bass

If a bass arrives from a Mr Steinberger then you know it's going to be an eye-opener, but this one really is something. Review by **Gareth Morgan**

There are very few people who deserve a place at the very top table of bass design – the game-changers, the designers and the inspired individuals whose innovations became globally accepted as standard – but Ned Steinberger is definitely one of them.

Steinberger, son of a Nobel Prize-winning physicist, began by designing furniture in his teens before a chance meeting with luthier Stuart Spector led to the first Steinberger-designed Spector NS bass in 1976. By 1979 Steinberger had stepped out on his own, developing what became the L-2, the headless 'cricket bat' bass played by the likes of Rush's Geddy Lee in the '80s. If you could deal with the looks, the L-2 was light, with a beautifully balanced carbon graphite body and phenolic fingerboard; not even a shaving of wood was employed in the design. The tuning system utilised an ultra-fine 40:1 gear ratio via knurled knobs protruding out of the body behind the bridge which also reduced string slippage.

The company could never keep up with demand and, realising that he was more interested in design than the machinations of business, Steinberger ceded control of the company to Gibson in 1986. In 1990 he founded NS Design, which has largely focused on electric versions of bowed classical instruments (his small-bodied electric uprights have become virtual industry standards). But now Mr Steinberger is once again exploring the solidbody bass guitar.



Maple body is curved for comfort and has a long horn for perfect balance

The neck is maple with a carbon fibre core and an adjustable truss rod

While the L-2's minimal form gave traditionalists an easy target, the Radius is a different kettle of fish. Sleek and curvaceous, the double cutaway maple body has a sumptuous flamed maple top giving it high-end classiness that suits its £2000-plus price tag. Unsurprisingly NS, after extensive research and contemplation, have thrown a ton of innovation at the Radius, not least the curved, convex Diradial body, with the front more tightly 'radiused' (convex) to provide a more comfortable playing-hand position, as well fitting snugly over the stomach/ribcage. The deep lower cutaway makes the 24th fret as easy to play as the first, while the elongated upper horn contributes virtually perfect balance and doubles as a handle.

The Radius is headless but this doesn't mean you need expensive double ball-end strings, as it comes with NS's excellent self-clamping tuning system. Simply snip the strings to length, just longer than the body, feed them through the slot just past the small black saddles and tune by winding the knurled knob: it's really easy and just as quick as using a string-winder.

While identifiable as one piece of maple, the neck has a carbon fibre core which aids stability and contributes sharper note definition and enhanced sustain. The dot-marker ebony board adds a traditional feel, and the extra-long 35" scale length offers extra definition and sustain, especially for the B string (the four-string is 34").

The Radius is kitted out with a pair of standard-looking soapbar pickups – low-impedance custom EMG units, to be precise – but this doesn't tell the whole story. NS and EMG have collaborated to produce a system that integrates ➔

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FACTFILE
NS CR5 Radius Bass

DESCRIPTION
Solidbody bass.
Made in the Czech Republic
PRICE **£2149 with gig bag**

BUILD **Ergonomic Diradial maple body with flame maple top, bolt-on headless maple neck with carbon fibre core and an ebony fingerboard carrying 24 medium nickel frets. Custom Hipshot bridge and aluminium head plate (past the nut). Chrome hardware**

ELECTRICS **Active with two low-impedance EMG pickups plus NS Polar piezo pickup (bridge saddle). Volume, magnetic/piezo Blend, Treble and Bass controls, three-position pickup selector switch (magnetic) and three-position piezo EQ switch**
LEFT-HANDERS **Not yet**
FINISH **Natural satin, charcoal satin, amber satin**
RANGE OPTIONS **Four-string Radius CR4 £1995; fretless four- and five-string same price as fretted versions**

SCALE LENGTH
889mm/35"
NECK WIDTH
Nut 47mm
12th fret 64mm
DEPTH OF NECK
First fret 21.5mm
12th fret 22.5mm
STRING SPACING
Nut 10mm
Bridge 18mm
ACTION AS SUPPLIED
12th fret treble 2mm
12th fret bass 2.5mm
WEIGHT
4.04kg/8.89lbs

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The quirky body looks super-modern but underneath it's a simple, well-made active bass
RRP **£2289**

these with the NS Polar piezo pickup, represented by the single metal runner/saddle mounted on the chunky steel bridge unit. You combine the output (or not) of each system via a simple-looking roster of controls, a master volume and, less inevitably, a two-band EQ. Sited directly beneath the bridge EMG, the remaining control allows you to balance between the pickup types or solo one or the other, and there are also a pair of switches. The rearwards one provides three EQ options for the piezos (forwards for more bass, back for more treble, and centre for a combination of both boosts), and the other is the EMG selector; forward for neck, back for bridge and centre for twin pickup mode. The Radius' 18v operation requires two 9v PP3 batteries, housed beneath a small plate within the electronics housing cover and accessed via a small knurled screw – not a true quick release option, but a pretty decent alternative.

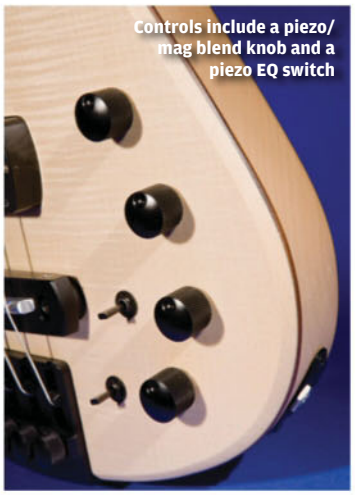
The seated balance is nigh-on perfect, but if you've never played a headless or 35" scale bass before, you may find it takes a little time to feel comfortable; initially we probably automatically compensate for a non-existent headstock. Still, it's definitely a journey worth embarking upon.

Sounds

The three pickup settings and Polar piezo combinations are going to give a lot of variation, and it's especially interesting to combine each magnetic setting with its piezo blend version. In twin pickup mode the Radius is big and brash with a solid bottom end, a slightly snarly midrange and highs that are bright and zingy, if a little high-mid biased. Blending in the Polar pickup sanitises the sound; the definition is still excellent but now the tone has lost the zingy high-mid sheen – a nicely even, controlled setting for pop exploits.

Low-impedance EMG pickups are linked to an 18v active preamp with a two-band EQ

The 15" radius fingerboard is ebony, the headplate is aluminium


Controls include a piezo/mag blend knob and a piezo EQ switch

Soloing the neck EMG produces a natural sound which hints at its acoustic forebears with a dark, punchy midrange and snappy but controlled highs. Be careful, as boosting Bass here will cause fixtures and fittings to fall from the walls, but adding lots of treble will get you an as big and an as aggressive a rock'n'roll sound as you could ever want. Again, blending in piezo downsizes the tone, evening it out without leeching the EMG's signature elements, keeping the growling lower strings and the hint of acoustic seasoning but with less weight and impact. The A and D strings are lighter, while the G is smoother and more naturally full-range.

Head in the direction of the bridge pickup and you'll discover a very nicely-matched output level and a turbo-charging of the usual elements. It's burpy and gurgling, with a perfect amount of high mids for snappy playing, but it's also a lot more menacing with nasty, barking lows and almost as much of a snarl in the midrange. If you ever really wanted to scare someone to death with a finger-funk bassline, here's the sound you've been looking for. Blending in the piezo is the perfect way to reduce your heart rate; the tone gradually loses the excessive zing and bottom end recedes. At full blend the Radius is recognisably nasal and burpy but has a much more polite character.

Often the problem with piezo systems on electric basses is that they sound hollow and mismatched when combined with magnetics. That's not the case here. True, when soloed, the NS's piezo side is wiry and tightly focussed, almost repressed, but there's more than enough bottom end on display and not too much clankiness; it sounds like a logical variation of what's come before and, best of all, the piezo is hard-wired into the EQ. Dialling in Bass heads you in a more upright direction with a thudding bottom end and a smooth rubberiness, while boosting treble gives sharp highs without fret-noise. The three switch settings offer even more subtle variations (try the 'more bass' setting with full bass boost and you'll get a very sweet tone for melodic meanderings in the higher registers), although you're more than likely to find one setting you like and stick with it.

Verdict

NS took their time putting the CR5 together, and they haven't wasted a single millisecond. It's a wonderful instrument that manages to look cooler than a headless bass has any right to, and the piezo/magnetic melange produces effectively three basses: a bit of an animal with the magnetics, more polite and refined when blended, or earthy and thudding in piezo mode. The neck isn't super-slim but it's very comfortable and contributes to the feeling of a bass that demands to be played, while the self-clamping tuning system is just fantastic. Of course, the plus-£2000 price tag is up in the professional echelon, but we think it's worth every penny.

FINAL SCORE

NS CR5 RADIUS BASS	
Build Quality	**19**/20
Playability	**18**/20
Sound	**18**/20
Value for money	**17**/20
Vibe	**18**/20
TOTAL	**90%**

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EBS
Billy Sheehan Signature Drive Pedal

This all-in-one bass mayhem pedal combines overdrive, clean/dirty blend, EQ and compression plus an added FX loop. Review by **Gareth Morgan**

EBS launched their first stompbox into the bass ether in 1993 in the form of the Octabass, a three-mode octave divider pedal that has become one of the most popular of its type. Their roster of pedals has slowly increased, with one notable recent addition being the Signature Wah/Tone Filter bearing the name of the great Stanley Clarke. With the second offering in this fledgling series EBS have got together with Billy Sheehan (Dave Lee Roth, Mr Big, Niacin, etc) to produce a brand new Signature Drive distortion pedal.

The BSSD is an all-analogue effect. It's housed in a metal box of slightly more girth than standard EBS pedals, measuring 53mm high (including protruding controls and switch), 96mm wide (including jack sockets) and 110mm deep. It works on the concept of balancing clean and effected signals while preserving low frequency levels and definition.

Finished in an appealing metallic purple, aside from Sheehan's image and signature, its face bears four controls: Drive (which adjusts overdrive gain level), Tone (adjusts the frequency scoop; to the right is thinner and clearer, centre is even, and to the left is more bottom-end focused and woollier), Level (controls distorted signal volume) and Clean (ditto the clean signal).

There's also an onboard compressor with three-position level switch (Off, Mid, High) and you can unscrew the backplate if you want to fiddle with two trim pots. One is for setting the Mid position level and the other is overall compressor threshold (sensitivity).

If you get deep into the BSSD, the Clean and Drive Loop enables you to insert another effect into clean or dirty signal paths and pre-load your tone with another effect, EQ, etc, producing a myriad of variations on the basic distorted tone.

Sounds

With Drive, Tone and Level at 12 o'clock and Clean near your 'bypass' level, the sound is pleasantly ruffed-up by a fizzing, chocolatey fuzz that's even and well-defined and feels very much like a bass sound with more of an edge. Wind up Tone for varying degrees of crunching distortion and saturate your sound by hiking drive Level or just shadow your notes with varying degrees of vicious spitefulness. Heavy rock mayhem or Jack Bruce's crunching '60s growl are easy to find. Winding Tone anti-clockwise produces a duller offering that's a little woolly at the extremes but fat and spiteful with a rubbery quality and plenty of impact when you crank Drive, while at lower levels the emphasis is in the low mids, adding a sense of foreboding to the darker character.

Nudging Tone to clockwise won't simply give distorted bass-light – care in the setting of the Clean level will enable a seamless transition from right to left, so the distorted tone is brighter with more harmonic life, but the core of your sound remains. There's a snappy, wiry quality to the distortion with a lighter, more metallic and less in-your-face feel. At more intense Drive levels you'll find a fruity, buzzsaw tone, and the contemporary heavy rock distortion here means you can have a ball hitting root/fifth shapes or widdling in the higher registers. By the way, we set Compression level at Mid for the review and didn't even notice it was there... which was a great result.

Verdict

The Sheehan Signature Drive offers various levels and intensities of distortion in a user-friendly package. Blending clean and dirty creates varying textures, and if you tweak the trim pots or use pre-inserts into the loops, you'll expand both functionality and versatility. If it's a mere fuzz you crave £179 may seem steep, but for a high quality distortion pedal it's a snip.

FINAL SCORE

EBS BILLY SHEEHAN SIGNATURE	
Build Quality	**19**/20
Usability	**19**/20
Sound	**19**/20
Value for money	**16**/20
Vibe	**18**/20
TOTAL	**91%**

FACTFILE

EBS Billy Sheehan Signature Drive

SPECS **Dedicated bass guitar distortion pedal. Made in China**
RRP **£179**

CONTROLS **Drive, Tone, Level (distortion), Clean (level), three-position Comp switch (Off, Mid, High). True bypass; battery or 9V p/s (not included) operation**

DIMENSIONS **90mm wide, 115mm tall, 35mm deep**
WEIGHT **0.48kg/1.07lb**
POWER **9v-12v**

CONTACT **Sound Technology 01462 480 000 www.soundtech.co.uk**

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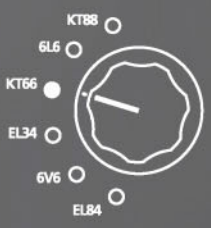

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Steel & STRINGS

The easiest roads don't offer the best views, and when force of circumstance led Tom Doughty to change musical styles he discovered a whole new challenge – as well as an amazing world of 20th century guitar design. Lars Mullen drops in

Tom Doughty is a guitarist who has performed with some of the world's finest slide and lap steel players. He's also a songwriter – his song *Journeyman Blues* was nominated for Best original Blues Song in 2013 – and has four critically-acclaimed CDs to his name. His has also been a different journey to that of most others, as in 1974, at the age of 17, the young fingerpicker had a road traffic accident that left him with permanent spinal injury and limited movement in his hands.

'It was a difficult time,' Tom says today. 'Knowing I was going to be wheelchair-bound from there on left me totally devastated. I took on an enormous amount of stress by thinking that I'd never be able to play the guitar again.

'For years I composed guitar music in my head, then right out of the blue, I thought it was about time I tried it and get it voiced through an instrument. I'd dabbled a little in my youth with slide guitar played upright in a regular way, but I knew that if I really wanted to pursue slide playing, I had to adapt to lap slide. Lap slide offers more variety as it totally relies on the slide performing on all the strings the full length and breadth of the fretboard, as opposed to conventional slide guitar playing.

'I eventually took a dusty guitar off the wall and used a piece of pipe on the first finger of my left hand, but my right hand had very little strength and I couldn't fingerpick. So I experimented with thumbpicks, and totally changed my approach to the guitar by using more elbow and wrist techniques.

'It took about five years of dedication before I started to make noises that were becoming respectable. I worked very hard and sat there with invention and tenacity and simply found a way around the problems.

'Previously I'd just followed the folk revival of the late '60s and '70s, but over the years I rediscovered the blues players of the '20s and '30s. I also developed my own style of playing; it has some major advantages over other lap slide players, but then again I can't perform some of the techniques like a player with normal dexterity.'

Tom approaches his situation from an engineer's point of view, and his life is full of helpful solutions, many self-invented. On his website you can view a video of his *Journeyman Blues* with Tom racing his dog Frank through the country lanes at great speed on a fold-up pedal trike that he built himself. 'I'm not lucky enough to just be able to pick up the guitar here and there, and maintain a level of professional playing,' he explains. 'I have to continually keep as fit as possible to get the most out of my body in order to function as a guitarist.

'I've adapted, remade and invented things to help my playing, and that's fascinating and satisfying in itself. When I play live I'm lucky enough to often get a great crowd, but I don't get any extra kudos for the challenges that I have. I can't compromise what an audience

Oahu headstock with upward-facing tuners

All from the Sears Roebuck catalogue, an Oahu, a Sawyer Grande and a Regal

Filed frets on a Martin 00-40H

of strangers must be thinking when I appear on stage, but I can say, hand on heart, that judging by the reactions, it's not done in a patronising way.

'Getting encores is always great, and I'll normally stay on stage to see if that develops, as there's often far too much effort involved to get me off stage and back again! I'm a firm believer that if a cloth monkey plays really good slide guitar, an audience will turn up and see him and say they had a wonderful time!'

Each one of the instruments in Tom's collection is a specialist lap-style or Hawaiian guitar – a breed which arose following the huge Hawaiian music movement of the early 20th century. 'The trend for the Hawaiian guitar – particularly the hollow-necked models – took off after they were seen being played at various trade shows around the world,' Tom explains. 'Like the 1915 Panama-Pacific Convention – that's the point at which the craze more or less started. Players like Sol Hoopii from Hawaii helped create the movement, and he's now regarded as one of the all-time great players.

'I have a few acoustic guitars in the collection that early manufacturers adapted from their conventional models to follow the Hawaiian trend of the time. These have raised bridges, much higher nuts, and the frets have been filed right down flat.

'Here are three: on the left is an Oahu with an open headstock and outward-facing machineheads, then comes a Sawyer Grand with an Italian gondola theme painted on the top, and finally we have a Regal with hand-painted chevrons on the soundboard. These were all budget models available from the famous US Sears Roebuck catalogue in the 1930s. The different brands were a bit like Austin, Morris and Wolseley in the era of British Leyland – they all came out of the same factory.

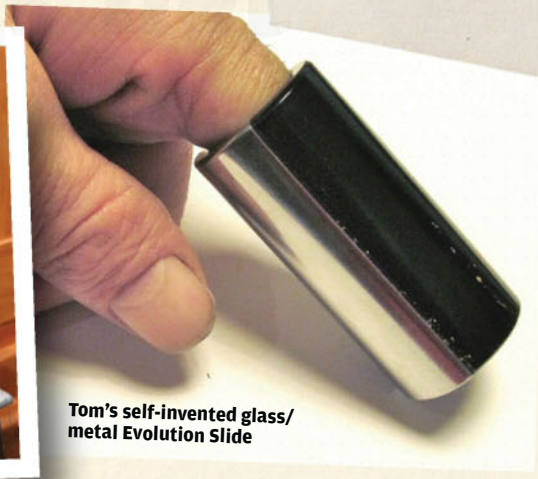
'Here's another made by the Oahu Publishing Company, a late '30s K71 jumbo in sunburst with a fancy floral gold leaf design around the bottom of the soundboard. It was one of their top-of-the-range models, priced just under $100. It's made from sycamore and spruce, and it's got excellent sustain. The little Gibson LG-2H next to it also has a high action and a purposely-designed square neck for slide playing. Most of these have standard width 1 7/8" fingerboards, although some are a little smaller at 1 3/4". This cute little guitar has survived its 62 years on the planet very well indeed, and it sounds wonderful.

'Martin was another company who took on the conversion-from-standard concept with raised nuts and bridges and filed-down frets. Even back then they were one of the world's biggest names in acoustics, and this small-bodied Martin OO-40H from the mid-'30s is a lovely example; the H in the model number denotes "Hawaiian". From the front it looks like a regular parlour-sized guitar, but a side view of the string height soon puts ↔

Left, a decalcomania Oahu K71; right, a Gibson LG-2H

1930s Martin 00-40H and a 1928 koa 0-28KH

L-R: Oahu Tonemaster, mid-'30s Harmony Supertone (detail, right) and a National Waikiki



Tom's self-invented glass/metal Evolution Slide

'I've learned to be a lot less busy playing solid electric lap steels, as they've got a lot more natural sustain'

it into perspective. This guitar hails from that golden era of Martins, with a Brazilian rosewood body and Adirondack spruce top, and it's brimming with quality appointments like snowflake position markers and abalone trimmings. The tone, sustain and note separation of this guitar are exquisite – it just seems to bring out the best in me every time.

'This Martin was left to me by the late John Pearse, a truly amazing player and a very clever guy who became my mentor and close friend as well as a real supporter of my music. I used to go and visit him in Germany, and we'd just sit and play together and I'd use this guitar. When he died in 2008, his wife said it should be mine to inherit.

'I also have a Martin 0-28KH, built in 1928 from flamed koa. It's the same body size but with less high-end cosmetics, but it's another truly wonderful example.

'People often ask me if I think old acoustic guitars like these have sonically matured over the years, and for me there seem to be two avenues to go down. I've talked to players who say that if an old instrument gets played so much it'll eventually wear out, give up and go to pieces, while others agree the sound gets sweeter and mellower with age. But I think all these instruments have individual circumstances... so the jury's still out on that one for me at the moment!'

Not all Tom's guitars are acoustic, and next he shows us a trio of solidbodied vintage classics. 'I've had several solidbody electric lap steel guitars over the years, and once again I've had to adapt my playing technique to them. I've learned to be less busy with what I play. It stands to reason that an acoustic model is just that, and you to have to work to coax out the tone. But of course, an electric solidbody is going to have a lot more natural sustain that's enhanced by an amp, like my Laney 8W valve combo when it's cranked up. I've used this for more gigs than I can remember, from performing live on Radio 2's Paul Jones blues show to teaching at a lap steel workshop in Poland... where I was the only one who couldn't speak Polish!

'On the left is a '50s Oahu Tonemaster, which has some nice trimmings. They were quite popular back then and are fairly collectable now. It's got rope-design binding around the mahogany body and fretboard and the headstock is faced with tortoiseshell.

'The only electric lap steel that has a permanent position with me on stage is this Harmony Supertone, which has been fitted with a horseshoe pickup made by Rickenbacker. I love the art deco design going on here, especially the headstock! Apart from the rosewood fingerboard the whole guitar is made from aluminium, and it really sustains. It's dirty, loud and raucous, and it's my first choice for rowdy festival gigs.

'The one on the right is a '40s National Waikiki which features National's own pickup and what I think is a maple body. It's a great example – it almost plays itself.'

Tom's bent for engineering has proved useful in more ways than one. 'I got a little vexed about having several slides on stage, some made from glass and some made from metal, and often I found myself halfway through a song wishing that I'd picked the other one...

'So I decided to something about it, and invented the Evolution Slide, with one side glass and the other metal. It solves the argument of what is the best material for a slide. In terms of engineering, I must say it was a challenge. For sure, they both have their own distinct tonal qualities, but now the player can have the best of both worlds on one finger and vary the tone simply by turning it around. There's a load of info on the slide out there if anybody's interested, on YouTube and on my website.'

Few serious steel players can withstand the allure of an original National steel-bodied resonator, and Tom has some beauties. 'These are two almost identical Style 1 National ➔

Two National Style 1 Tri-cones – a '28 on the left and a '29 on the right

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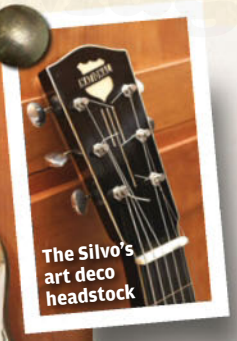


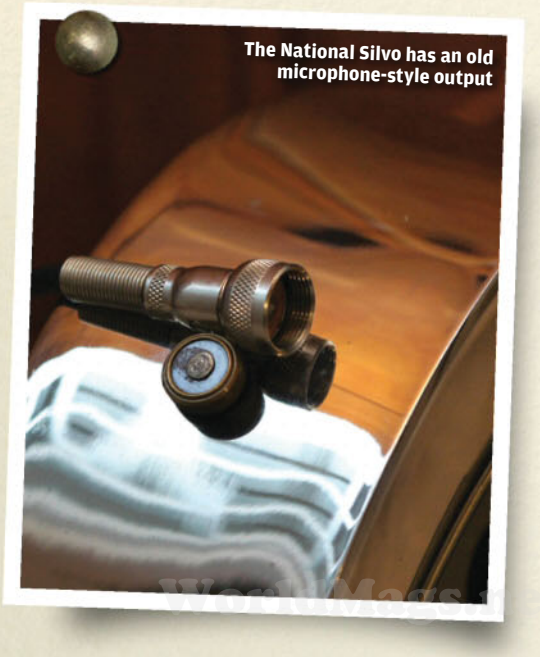
Tri-cones which date from 1928 and 1929. The '28 model came from the USA and has a rather unusual warm sound for a metal-bodied reso. But it's the '29 that has some great history behind it, and it's always one of my first choices when it comes to gigs and recording. You can hear this on most of my albums including *The Bell, Running Free, Have Taste Of This* and the *Journeyman Blues* EP. I bought it unseen and unplayed en route to a festival gig in Canada, Ontario, in 2006. I took a chance and just plugged it in on stage, and it was absolutely stonking. I've since traced the original owner, who bought it new in 1929 and used it for teaching. You can see that the position marker at the fifth fret is missing as a result of a tumble on stage, and that also put a hefty dent in the body. I had it repaired by a friend who worked in the local car body works. A scary moment – I winced as a two-ton press went to work. They did a fine job, and I swear it now sounds even better!

'I also have a '34 National Duolian that came from George Gruhn's in Nashville. It's a metal guitar with the original optional brown paint finish – which looks like the false wood effect found on a lot of old American station wagons. It's in superb condition and it's one of the loudest guitars I own.

'The '39 National Silvo was one of the company's first forays into electric resonators in an attempt to attract players to a new sound. When you stand back and look at this one you see it's built from components they probably had in the parts bin, but what a joyous thing it is. The Silvo didn't sell that well, and I believe it was dropped around 1939, so it's a rare model. It was offered with the Silvo pickup system installed into a tenor guitar-size body, which has its cone area covered with the most amazing art deco cover, and I love the Roman numeral markers on the regular-length fingerboard and the coaxial-style input socket.

'This jumbo-sized acoustic slide guitar was built by George La Foley, a British maker from Kent who made a lot of instruments for the London distributors Barnes & Mullins up until around 1930, including mandolins, ukuleles and guitars.

'He was one of those boundary-pushing pioneers, designing guitars that he hoped would produce a new sound. This guitar was obviously built for lap-style playing with the high action and no frets, but he drilled extra soundholes into the recessed area behind the bridge, probably with the intention to enhance the tone and increase the volume. I bought this in 2006, and in the case was half a ticket that confirmed the guitar had been owned by Walter Darby and had travelled on the P&O steamship Comorin, which was a passenger service between Australia and the USA. I've often wondered if he was a travelling musician, but I've drawn a blank trying to find any further information.



'George La Foley was certainly a very interesting maker but all the statistics and figures are very vague, so I can't tell you much about the little parlour-sized guitar on the right either. What I have noticed, though, is that the grain on the soundboards and bodies of a lot of his guitars is almost identical, as confirmed by a friend who collects his mandolins, so I reckon a lot of these were made from the same source of wood. Maybe he bought a tree!'

We pop over to France for this next very unusual guitar. 'This Gélas Hawaiian guitar is a little unusual – one of those fascinating designs that tried to enhance the output and tone of an acoustic guitar. They were a favourite for many high-profile players in the first half of the 20th century.

'It was built by the Frenchman Lucien Gélas in the early 1900s, and features his patented twin soundboard design called the Double Top. He used the same construction method for his range of regular guitars and mandolins. In theory, the space between the two soundboards acts as a resonating area. It does seem to work, as this guitar is certainly louder than any other of the same size.

'My little Tabu Hawaiian parlour guitar is quite interesting; it's made from the ground up using very thin flamed koa. The inner label has the name "Paul F Summers", and he was quite a famous player during the '20s, so this must have been built to his specifications... his signature model, maybe. It's as light as a feather and very vibrant. I actually heard about it from a house clearance sale in Manchester, and it arrived complete with a ➔

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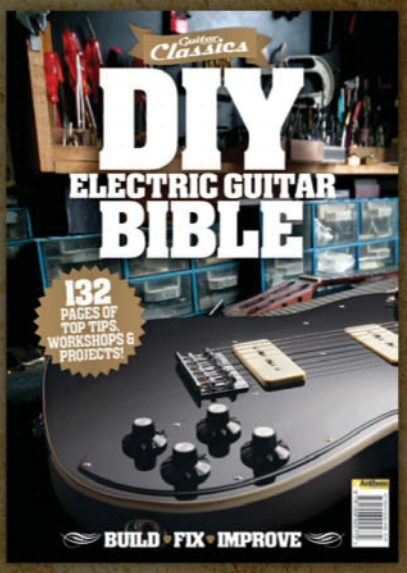

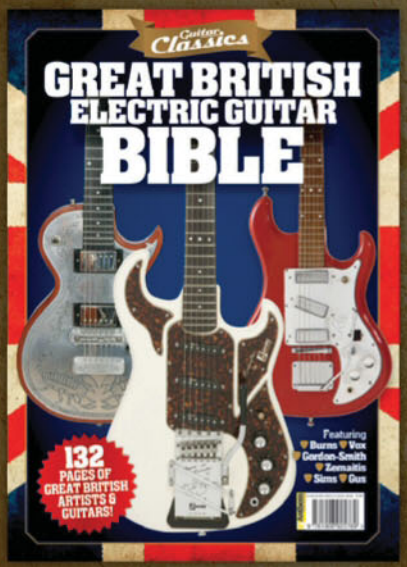

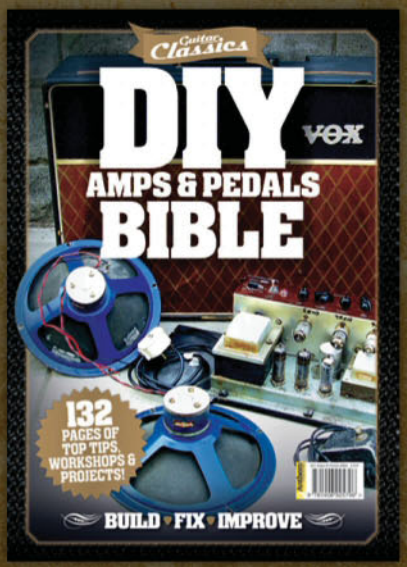

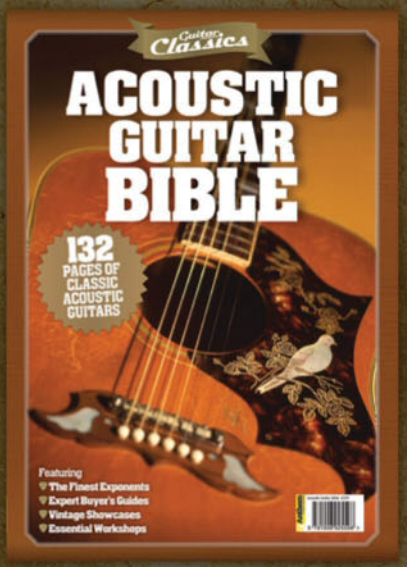

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case, with strings, a bar and some sheet music. A great find, this one.'

Tom is delighted that the Weissenborn brand of Hawaiian guitars has enjoyed something of a revival over the last few years. 'These are superb, purposely designed lap slide guitars," says Tom. 'I have original Weissenborn guitars, and some nice examples by some lesser-known brands as well.

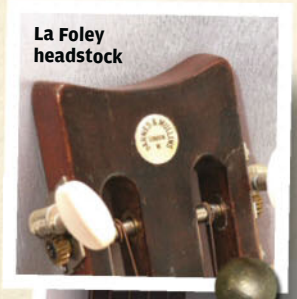
'One of them is another from George La Foley, looking great with the typical Weissenborn body shape and hollow neck. Once again this was made for Barnes & Mullins, but in typical La Foley style it includes another of his inspiring ideas. This time he's drilled holes right in the centre of the position markers to act as soundports for the hollow neck.

'Here's another one, built by James Mann of Auckland, New Zealand. This came to me with its original bill of sale proving that a certain Mr Cooper bought it for £15 in 1927. It fuels my interest immensely to know that these luthiers were still experimenting to find the optimum sound, volume and tone. I've never seen a version like this one before... in some ways it's built to resemble a cello with a suspended fingerboard and an arched body. It almost sounds like a archtop jazz guitar, but with extra sustain.

The patent Gélas double top

Unusual French-made Gélas and a koa Tabu with pyramid bridge

'The Gélas Hawaiian guitar is a fascinating design which tried to enhance volume and tone with a patented twin soundboard'


La Foley headstock

'The Schireson Brothers, Nathan and Jacob, also made their own versions in Los Angeles. Here's one of their models, a very rare, top of the range Lyric Style 4 with a mahogany body, spruce top and inlaid rosette. It's in amazing condition and complete with the original tan canvas case and a set of very old strings.

Drilled markers were intended to act as soundports

'In their 20 years of production I believe that only about a thousand real Weissenborns were produced, so it's become a rather rare instrument. Luckily, the mouse that lived inside the case of my Weissenborn Style 1, dating from as far back as 1925, only feasted on some paperwork and sheet music! The guitar and accessories are in good order for the year. This is one of many which were sold or distributed by the Henry Stadlmair Company of New Jersey; it's completely original and built completely from figured koa, which gives a balanced sound that's warm in the bass with a cutting, yet mellow top end.

'A lot of the builders of this style of guitar were all based in one area of Los Angeles which couldn't have been any bigger than a square mile. They included Knutsen, the De Lano brothers, and also the Oscar Schmidt company who made my 1920s Hilo model. It's built from mahogany, with decorated rope-effect bindings around the body and soundhole. This guitar has a much deeper body which produces a gorgeous deep warm tone, and at $38 it was a good, affordable alternative to a Weissenborn.

Left, a La Foley Weissenborn-style; right, archtop by James Mann of New Zealand

'Here's a more modern-style version that was built by my good friend Erich Solomon. Erich is based in Epping, New Hampshire and he's renowned for making fine guitars, including beautiful archtop jazz models. This one is simply called a Long Scale Hawaiian, and it has a body built from black walnut and a spruce top. It was made in 2006 and it really raises the bar in the sound department – acoustic volume, bass, treble, dynamics, resonance and the quality of the overtones. This is one of the few guitars in my collection that I use full time for gigs. It's got a Fishman pickup and it sounds fantastic through any amp or PA. It's currently the newest guitar I own.

'A different contemporary approach is taken by my Bear Creek Hawaiian guitar, as it's based on a traditional Weissenborn Style 4 design. It's an instrument I feel very honoured to own, for a special reason. The story is that over the years I got to know ↦

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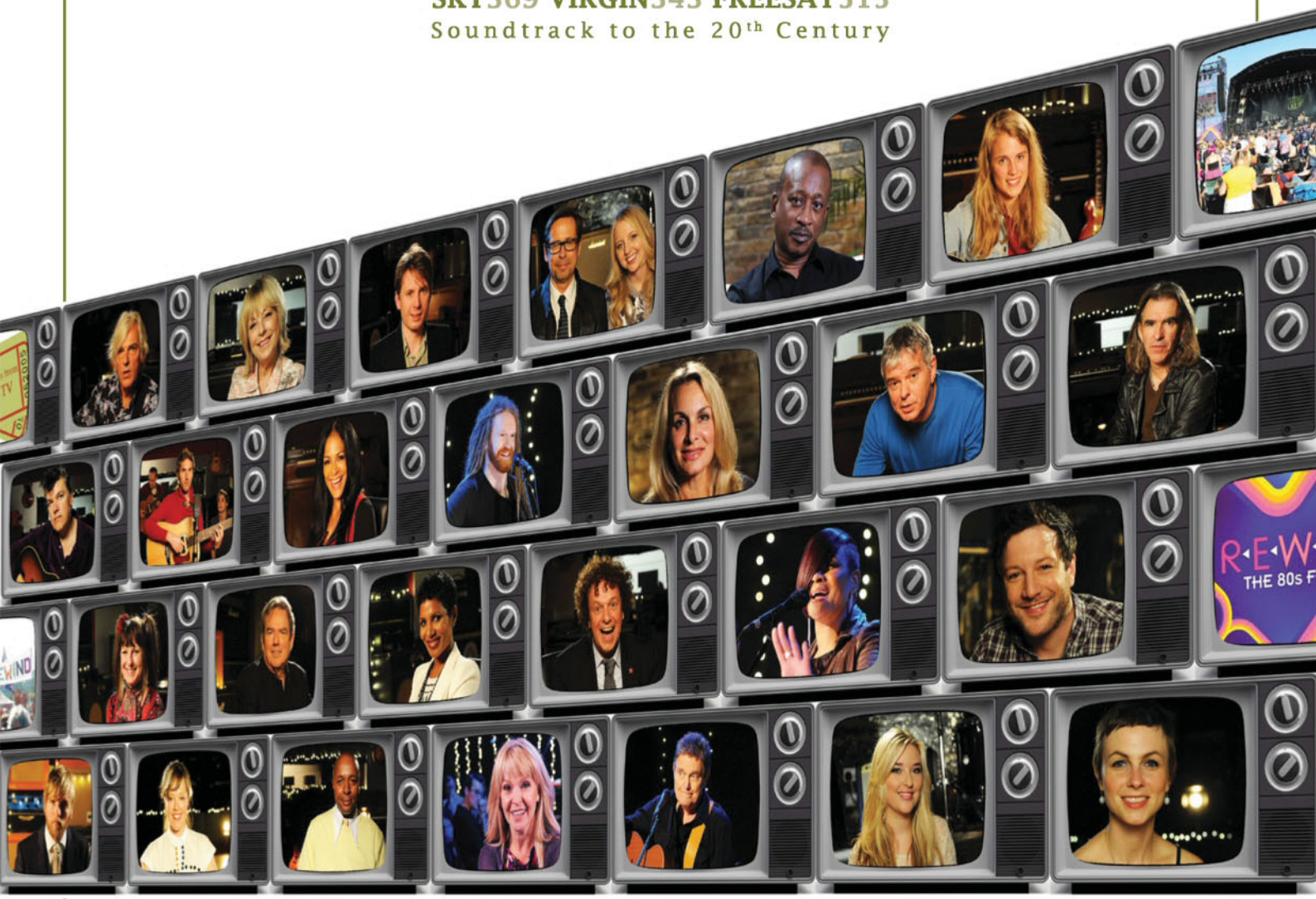

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Schireson Bros guitar and, right, a 1925 Weissenborn Style 1

Left: Oscar Schmidt Hilo. Right: a modern Erich Solomon

The IGS Bear Creek guitar and a '20s Kona Style 3

and had the privilege to play in the USA both with Woody Mann and the late great Bob Brozman. During one visit, Bob let me try his own Beer Creek Kona Rocket guitar at one of the International Guitar Seminars that they created. It was obvious to Bob that I was totally in awe of his guitar, but little did I know that he actually set up a fund among IGS members to raise the money to buy me this guitar. What can you say to that... it was just an amazing experience.

'The looks of the guitar speak for themselves, and anyone who hears it always comments on the sound quality – the Fishman pickup reproduces the acoustic tone perfectly. It's probably the most treasured model I own, and I use it for all my gigs, and it can be heard on all my albums.

'The last of the original Weissenborns is this Kona Style 3, dating from the mid-'20s. Again, it arrived here complete with case, tickets, strings and slide and the name "Ralph Voecks" pencilled inside, who I now know lived in Nebraska. He couldn't have played it very much as it's in remarkable condition, and it's very loud indeed.'

There's one outwardly lesser instrument that holds a dear place in Tom's heart. 'Ah, this takes me back,' he grins. 'It's the first dusty guitar that I took off the wall when I decided to go down the slide road, and it was my first attempt at self-converting a normal acoustic to slide playing.

'It's a Yamaha FG-260 12-string acoustic. I removed six of the strings, had my dad make a brass nut, and tinkered with the height of the bridge. It had a naturally wide fingerboard, so I was already halfway there. I used it to record a cover of Charley Patton's *Banty Rooster* on my first album, *The Bell*.

'It's been a long and enjoyable ride collecting these wonderful guitars, as well as recording and playing live over the last 35 years – and I'm still enjoying every minute. You know, the template for regular electric and acoustic guitars was more or less set years ago, but for me, all these lap-style guitars reflect a different path – the work of people who were inventing new ideas about guitar construction and striving to achieve what they thought would be the best-sounding instruments in the world of acoustic guitars with hollow sound chambers.

'I think there's a analogy to be drawn between these instruments and any guitarist, never mind the level of their musical talent or their physical ability. If you are really hooked on your passion, then rather than just resting on your laurels, you just have to carry on moving forward, developing new sounds – and new music, too.'

For more information on Tom Doughty – and Frank the dog – visit www.tomdoughty.com

'The template for regular electric and acoustic guitars was more or less set years ago, but these guitars reflect a different path'

Tom Doughty and his faithful converted Yamaha FG

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Project Superstrat

Though you can buy a new Fender with almost any pickup configuration, modifying a standard model to your own tastes can sometimes make perfect sense. This month, **Huw Price** helps convert a '50s reissue into a rock machine

The chances are that most guitarists are would-be guitar designers to a greater or lesser extent. Of course, we aren't all inclined to sit there with a paper and pencil doodling body and headstock shapes, but how many of us have found ourselves dreaming about pickup swaps, wiring schemes and various other modifications at one time or another?

It carries on through the generations – but these days guitar modders can try out their ideas online before they buy the wrong parts or do any damage to a precious instrument. *G&B* reader Dafydd Jones used a website called Kisekae (www.yajimastringworks.com) to help him decide on the parts and the look he wanted for his new project. The design program allows you to drag and drop guitar parts onto a guitar body to see how the finished guitar should end up.

Starting out with a Mexican-made Fender Strat, Dafydd wanted a beefier and more powerful instrument for the rock and heavy blues styles he enjoys playing. However he likes single coil tones too, so he got in touch to see if we could help. We recommended a Super 5-way switch that can be used with coil-tappable humbuckers to provide a variety of sounds. So once Dafydd had acquired the necessary parts, he turned up with his guitar, and Project Superstrat was ready to go.

1 REMOVING THE SCRATCHPLATE

Before starting a project like this it's wise to assess the condition of the guitar. Since the guitar was only a couple of years old the frets were in good shape, and it was clean and well cared for. Even so, we agreed to perform a basic setup once all the parts were swapped over.

The first job was to remove the scratchplate along with all the pickups and controls. We could have recycled the volume and tone pots, but keeping the scratchplate and controls intact would give Dafydd the option of returning his guitar to stock should he ever change his mind or decide to sell it. Besides which, the original Fender pots were 250K, which would probably make a humbucker equipped guitar sound too dark. To maintain clarity and definition, 500K or even 1M pots are recommended for humbuckers.

On this particular guitar four wires needed to be detached. Three had black insulation and were the ground connections from the output jack, trem spring claw and the conductive paint in the pickup and control cavity routs. These were all soldered to the casing of the volume pot and, since there was so much slack wire, we decided to snip them off rather than attempt to de-solder. The fourth wire was the white insulated signal wire connecting the centre tag of the volume pot to the tip of the output jack.

Above: these are the wires you must de-solder or snip to remove the scratchplate assembly

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2 FITTING THE NEW SCRATCHPLATE

One of the problems that everybody encounters with aftermarket parts is that they don't always line up perfectly, and some barely fit at all. The Boston-branded scratchplate Dafydd had sourced from Amazon was a decent quality item with a subtle mint green hue. Even so there were some minor issues.

With the original scratchplate removed I was able to carry out a trial fit. The good news was that the new guard looked fantastic on the off-white body, but the bad news was that the screw holes on the bass side of the neck didn't line up. In fact, one was in a completely different location. The screw holes on the treble side were spot-on, but I would have been forced to screw the others in at angles if I wanted to re-use the original screw holes.

The solution was simple. Fold some sandpaper over the end of a long wooden match and twist the match to round over the corners. In a short while you should have turned the end of the match into a small rounded dowel. Next you should fill the screw hole and cover the end of the match with some strong wood glue that will set hard. I get the desired results with Titebond original.

Next, push the rounded end of the match into the glue-filled hole, snap it off about half an inch proud of the surface, then gently tap it snug with a soft mallet, taking great care not to dent the finish or to snap the match. Simply repeat the process for each screw hole and set the body aside while the glue dries. Preferably this will be overnight, to make sure.

When the glue had set, I used a Stanley knife blade to cut the tops of the matches flush with the body. If you try this, be extremely careful with the finish... and your fingers. Push the blade towards the routs, not away, to ensure that if you do slip and damage the finish, it will be in the area hidden beneath the scratchplate.

The second problem we had to address was that the holes in the scratchplate were too narrow for the shafts of the CTS pots Dafydd had bought for the project. It's quite a common problem when modding guitars, because manufacturers in the Far East tend to use metric measurements and US manufacturers work with imperial.

We could have drilled out the holes to widen them, but I prefer to use a reamer tool. To compensate for the taper I reamed from both sides, continually checking until I had just enough width for the pot shafts.

Above: the new scratchplate was a good fit but the screw holes didn't quite line up

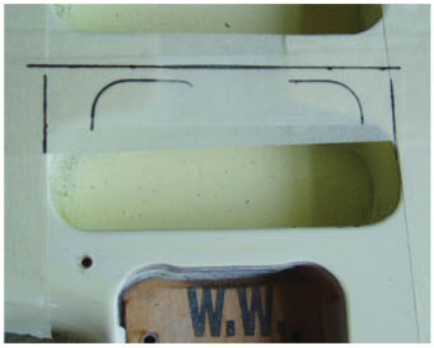
We squeezed wood glue into the screw holes and tapped in rounded-off matchsticks to plug them

You can use a fresh blade to trim the tops of the matchstick plugs flush with the finish

Rather than drill out the scratchplate holes to widen them for the new pots, we used a reamer

Here the volume pot hole has been widened, and we're about to move onto the tone pot hole

3 MARKING OUT THE NEW PICKUP ROUT



Fender's Strat bodies are made with various types of pickup routs. Obviously three single coil routs are the traditional way, but some have humbucker routs at the bridge and neck, while others have the 'swimming pool' rout that allows the various factories to install any pickup combination. Dafydd's Strat was already routed for a bridge humbucker, but fitting the neck humbucker he wanted meant I had to remove some wood to accommodate it.

Left: masking tape was placed over the finish in the area where wood needed to be removed to accommodate the new pickup. We traced around the pickup hole then added a bit of extra clearance

Positioning the new scratchplate accurately on the body showed that wood only needed to be removed from the bridge side of the rout. I covered that area of the body with masking tape, re-positioned the scratchplate, and traced around the scratchplate's neck pickup cut-out. As you can see from the photo, I then marked the intended rout line an eighth of an inch away from the edge of the pickup cut-out to gain a bit of extra clearance, and finally drew two lines to join it up with the edges of the existing rout.

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4 ROUTING OUT

It's possible to remove excess wood with a chisel, but the proper way to do it is to use a router. I bought mine used for a little under £15; in fact the bearing guided router bits I used for this project cost more than the router itself.

Routers are terrifyingly efficient tools and you must never attempt to make cuts freehand. I transferred the intended rout shape onto a piece of scrap ply and cut it out with a jigsaw to make a routing template. Try cutting just inside the lines and tidying up the edges with a rasp, file or sanding block to make them straight and smooth. Don't worry about rounding off the corners – the bit's rounded guide bearing will take care of that.

The routing template was clamped onto the body to hold everything in position. Some people use double-sided tape, but on our Strat the finish under the scratchplate had a tendency to chip and I didn't want to risk inadvertently removing the finish when removing the router template.

Don't try cutting to full depth straight away. I used a shallow 3/8" router bit for the first two cuts and allowed the bearing to be guided by the router template. I swapped over to my 1" bit for the final cut: if I had attempted to use the 3/8" bit, there would have been nothing to guide it as it reached the wire channel area. I set the 1" bit 1/16" above the bottom of the cavity and the guide bearing was able to make contact with the template all the way around. If you look at the photo, the areas of exposed wood show how much was removed. The wood we cut away only lightened the body by 20g – less than half the weight of a PP3 battery.

The router template might look a bit rough and ready, but the pickup cavity will be smooth

For the very first pass we used a 3/8" router bit and cut only to a one-third depth

We used the same 3/8" bit for the second cut then swapped over to a 1" bit for the final cut. When we had finished, the pickup cavity was big enough to accommodate a humbucker. You can see the router bits we used in the neck pocket

5 LOADING THE NEW SCRATCHPLATE

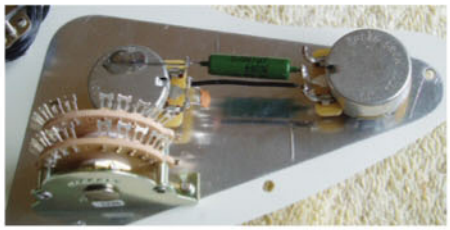
The first step towards completion involves fitting the two 500K control pots and the Seymour Duncan Super 5-Way switch. These switches are double the thickness of a standard Strat switch, so when installing one into Strat with a regular control rout, the connection tags should be oriented towards the centre otherwise it won't fit. It's colour-coded for Seymour Duncan pickups, but since Dafydd had chosen a Duncan TB-4 Trembucker for the bridge and a SH-4 for the neck, that was fine (and do check out the Seymour Duncan website – it's a fantastic resource for modders, with clear diagrams of just about any wiring configuration you can think of).

First I connected the recommended 0.047uF capacitor for the tone pot. Since we were going with two rather than three controls, I was able to bridge the gap between the two pots with the capacitor itself, point to point style. We used a nice new old stock Russian paper-in-oil capacitor bought from eBay. Taking inspiration from Gibson's 1950s wiring schemes, I connected the tone circuit to the output (centre) lug of the volume pot. The idea is that any treble bleed through the tone circuit remains constant regardless of the position of the volume pot. Since hot humbuckers tend to sound quite dark, I soldered a 0.002uF treble bleed capacitor across the input and output tags of the volume control; this helps to retain clarity when the volume control is turned down to clean up an amp.

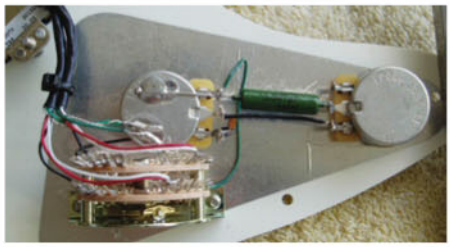
With all the preliminary wiring done, it was time to install the pickups and hook them up to the Super 5-Way switch. Although Trembuckers are supposedly designed for Strat-type guitars, their mounting screws were too long for the depth of the body routs. Sawing and filing metal in the vicinity of a pickup is inadvisable because the pickup will end up covered in metallic dust, so I simply snipped the excess off with a strong pliers.

The switching arrangement Dafydd wanted was neck humbucker, both pickups and bridge humbucker, with single coils in the in-between settings. I found the correct schematic on the Seymour Duncan website and followed the instructions. However, there was a problem: rather than having the two inner coils on the in between settings as described, we got the outer coil of the neck humbucker. This could be because the JB SH-4 Dafydd bought was actually a bridge rather than a neck unit. Either way it worked out well because we got the fatter-sounding neck coil under the octave harmonic along with some extra tonal variation because the single coils were spaced wider apart. The polepieces of the neck pickup lined up perfectly too.

With the three ground wires reconnected to the body of the volume control and the white jack tip wire re-connected to the centre lug of the volume pot, the time had come to put the guitar back together. Whenever you rewire a guitar, especially when it's a wiring scheme you haven't used before, it makes sense to test everything before screwing down the scratchplate and re-stringing; that way, if you have made a mistake, fixing it will be a lot less work. Thankfully the wiring diagram we downloaded was so clear that everything worked first time. However we did feel that the 0.047uF capacitor rolled off too much treble, and we eventually changed it for a 0.022uF.



Above: the pots and Super 5-Way switch were installed and initial connections made first. Note the treble bleed capacitor on the volume pot and the way the tone capacitor is wired point-to-point



The pickup wires have been soldered to the switch as per the Seymour Duncan schematic. We prefer to keep cable runs as short as possible and the excess green wire we snipped off was used to connect the switch to the volume pot

The verdict

We were really pleased with the way this Strat modification turned out, but the only opinion that really mattered was that of Dafydd, the owner. Here's what he had to say: 'I've always wanted to have a custom build guitar, and now I do. It looks amazing and the sound is stunning. All my mates think that it's fantastic, and even my parents cannot believe the sound from it... so much so they don't make me put my headphones on all the time! Since I've had it back, I haven't played any of my other guitars and I have joined another band. It is an absolute gem and thank you so much for customising it for me.'

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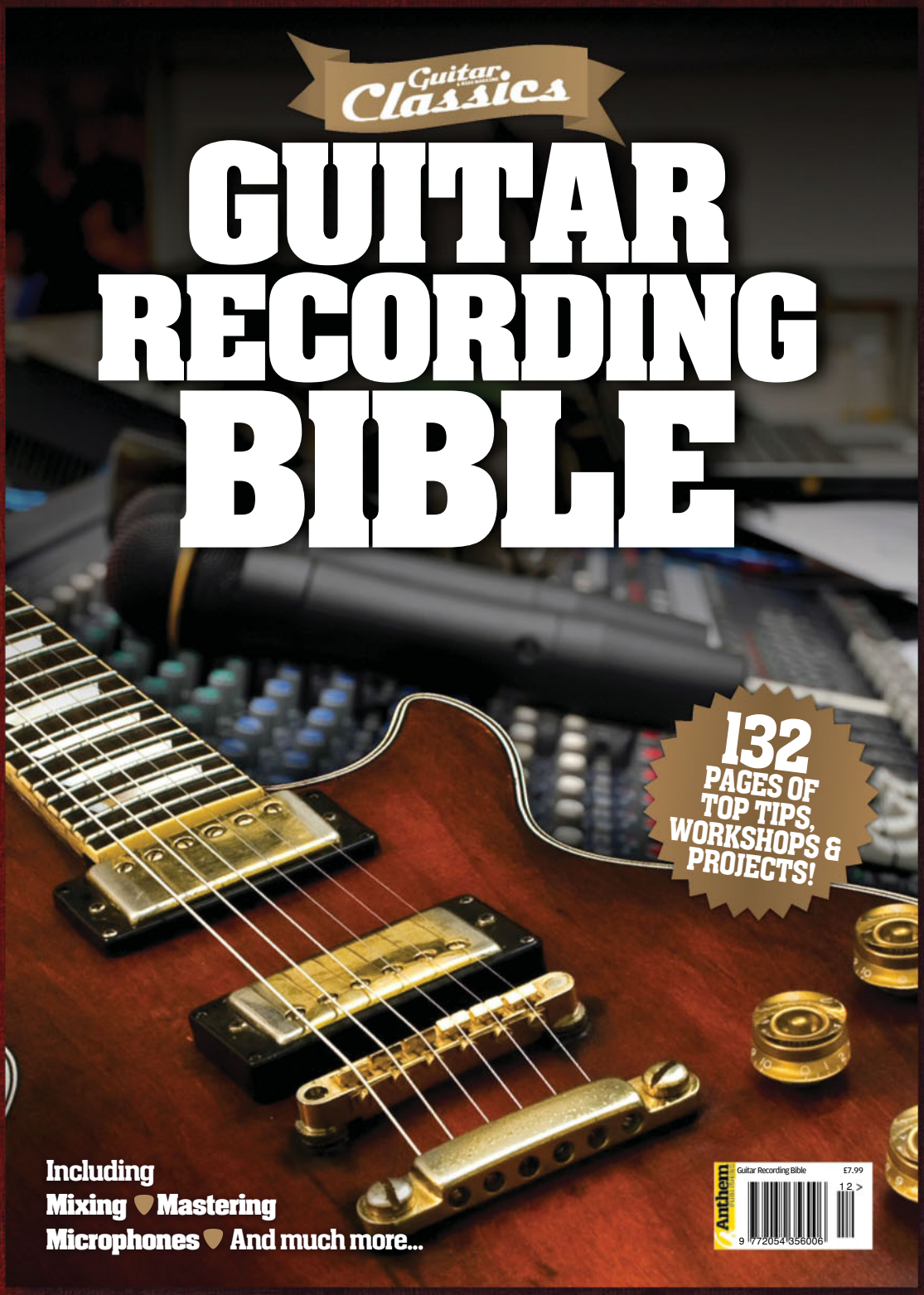

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DRILLS FOR
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Minor Threat

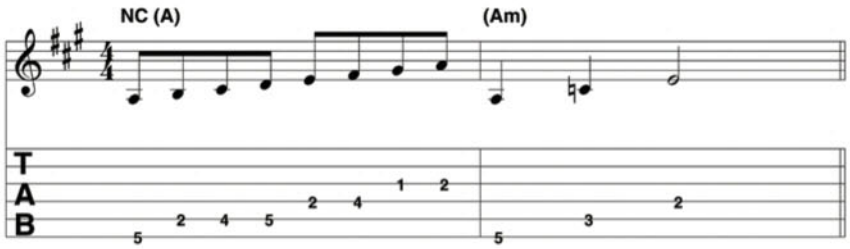
You'll be covering the entire fingerboard by the end of this exploration of minor triads

Last month's Drills For Thrills looked at the major triad – a triad being a three-note chord, as you'll surely remember, and a major triad being a three-note chord consisting of root, third and fifth. We then worked through a series of exercises that moved the major triad across and up the fretboard – a good mental exercise to help you visualise the shapes on the fretboard. This month, we'll be looking not at major triads but at minor ones. As well as further improving your knowledge of the fretboard, these can also act as an important springboard for improvising ideas. Read and absorb...

1 MAKING A MINOR TRIAD

4/4 TIME

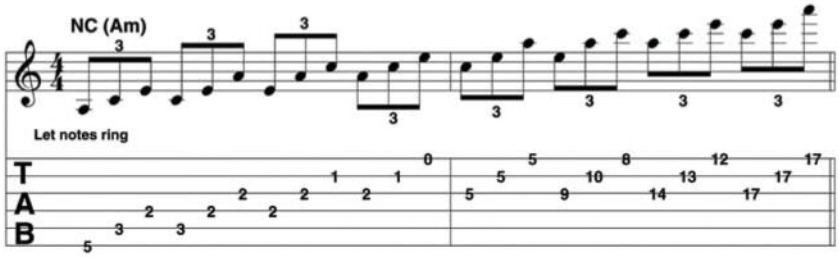
Bar 1 shows the A major scale. To form a minor triad, we simply take the root or first note from the scale, plus the flattened third and the fifth. The third note in the A major scale is C# on the fifth string, fourth fret, and if we flatten it then lower it by a semitone, or one fret, it leaves us with C natural on the fifth string, third fret. Bar 2 shows the A minor triad in arpeggio form – that is, with the notes played one at a time.



2 RISING TRIADS

4/4 TIME

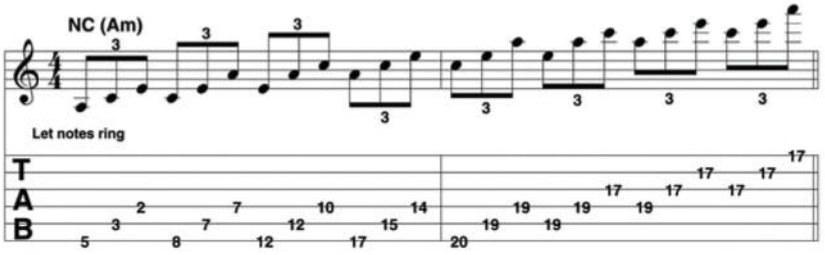
This exercise is the A minor triad moved across the fretboard. The shapes are similar to those in last month's Exercise 2, but since we're now in a minor key, this time we're playing C natural instead of C#. Let each group of three notes ring on into each other, and memorise the fretboard shape for each triad. We're proceeding across the fretboard by transposing the lowest note in each triad an octave higher.



3 CLIMBING TRIADS

4/4 TIME

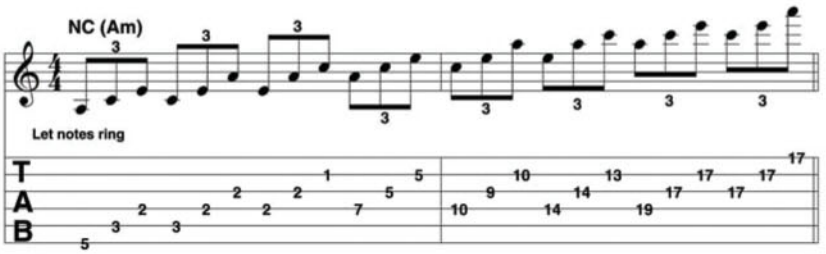
Next, instead of moving across the fretboard, we are now moving up the fretboard. Again, let the notes ring on for each triad and try to memorise the shapes for each one. The exercise proceeds up the bottom three strings until we run out of frets; if you're playing on an acoustic or a classical guitar you won't be able to proceed as far up the fretboard as in the tablature shown, and you'll have to start moving across the fretboard sooner.



4 COMBINING THE TWO

4/4 TIME

In this exercise we put both approaches together by starting to move across the fretboard until we reach strings four, three and two, at which point we start moving up the fretboard. It will hopefully be apparent that this is not the only way of proceeding across and up the neck... all sorts of combinations are possible. In order to test your knowledge of triad shapes, try experimenting with different paths across and up the fretboard. Just like last time, Exercises 2, 3 and 4 are ascending exercises – but, like last time, you can easily turn them around and play them downwards.



We've been working in A minor, but a great way to improve your fretboard knowledge would be to transpose these exercises into other keys. We'd advise starting with the main guitar minor keys – C minor, D minor, E minor and G minor – but then you could proceed to the other minor keys. Next month, we'll be looking at two other kinds of triads – diminished and augmented.

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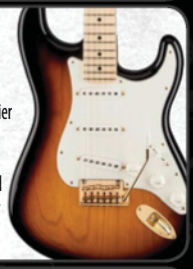

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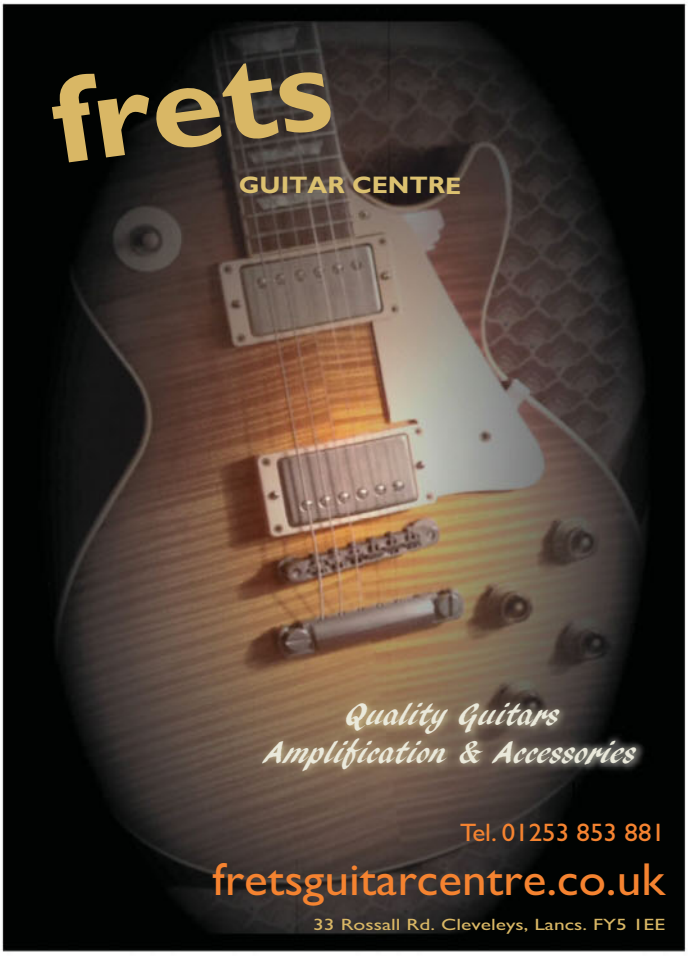

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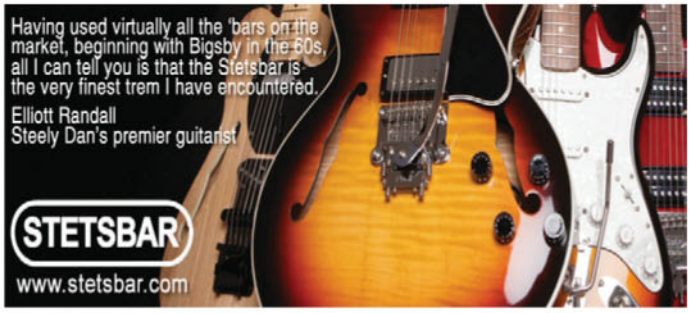

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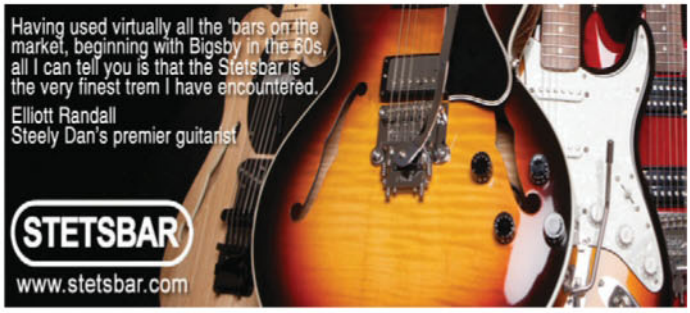

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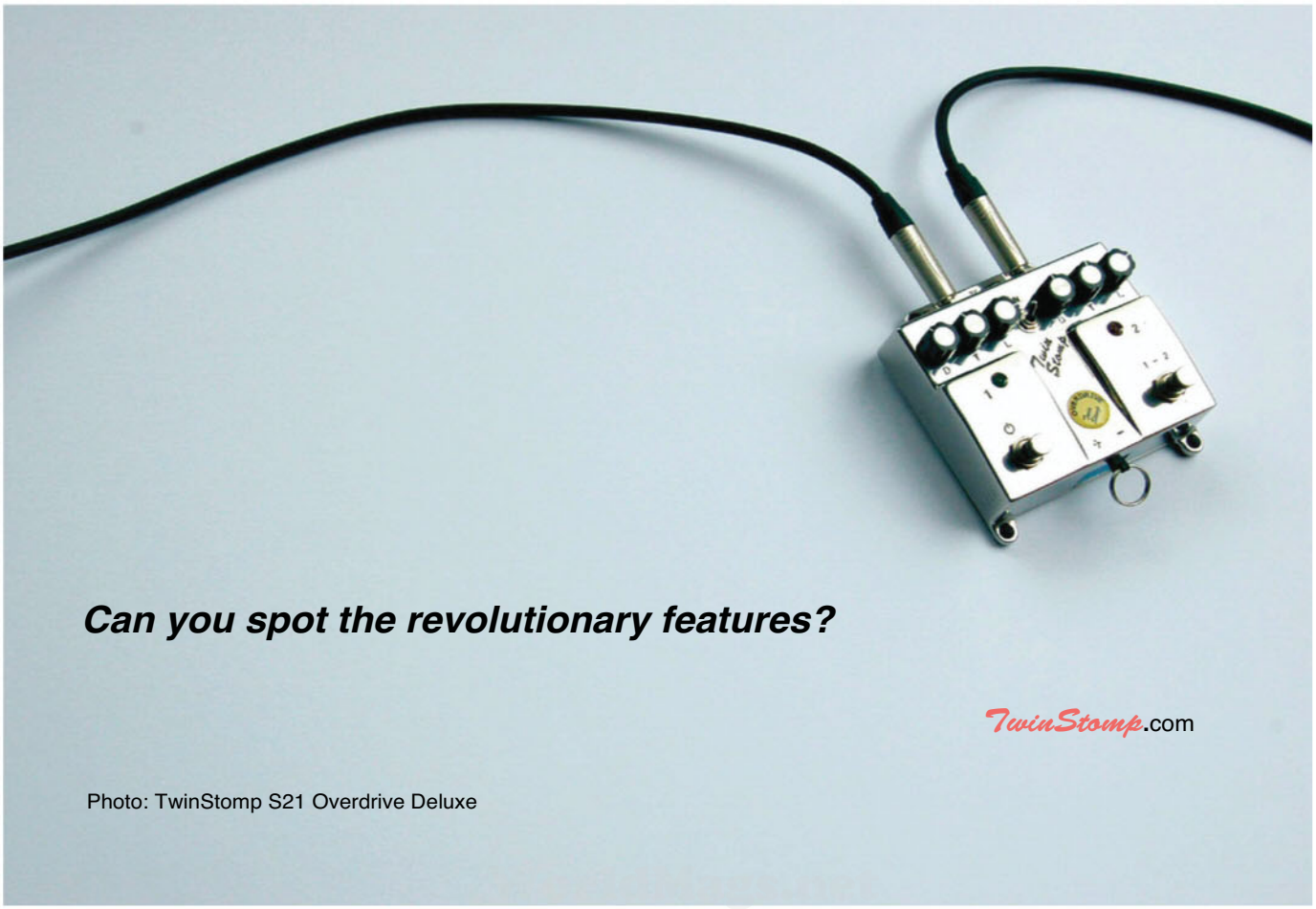

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Soundtrack of my life

Jack Bruce

From jazz to blues to classic pop to droning indie doom, the pioneering bassist's recommended listening choices are as esoteric as his own music

Photo: Tina Korhonen

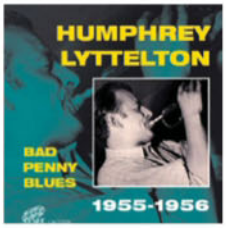
One of the most influential bass players on the planet, Jack Bruce remains a maverick and an innovator. His musical journey began with a scholarship at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music where he studied briefly before bailing out, aged just 17, to play bass in dance and jazz bands. He washed up in Alexis Korner's Blues Inc by 1962, moving on to form the Graham Bond Organisation, also starring John McLaughlin and Ginger Baker. Stints in the Bluesbreakers and Manfred Mann followed before his time as Cream's esteemed frontman. Bruce has made a habit immersing himself in left-field projects ever since, notably co-writing Frank Zappa's best-selling *Apostrophe* album in 1974. Jack's first solo album in 10 years, *Silver Rails*, quietly reaffirms a special talent coming home to his rock roots, but with those avant-garde leanings always adding spice. 'I feel with this album I'm handing on the baton to the next noisy bass player!' he says with a grin... but could there ever be another?

John Lewis
THE GOLDEN STRIKER

I was studying classical music and loving jazz when I first heard this and thought, 'wow, that's interesting'. It's very fluid and very delicate. His band, The Modern Jazz Quartet, always dressed up like classical musicians and acted very seriously. This counts as one of my main introductions to modern jazz.

Humphrey Lyttelton
BAD PENNY BLUES

This song was a big influence on all us kids from that generation – I know Lennon and McCartney said *Lady Madonna* was influenced by it. It's not trad jazz and it's not modern jazz, it's somewhere between. This song is basically just a very dirty blues with trumpet, piano, bass and drums, and it's just really good.



Charles Mingus
MINGUS AH UM

This was a revelation to me as a bass player. I was starting to play double bass and Mingus did what I wanted to do – he was a bassist who composed, and he also used folk-blues in jazz. I thought that was incredibly hip! I then joined the Alexis Korner band – that's very much what we were up to, in a way.

Robert Johnson
KING OF THE DELTA BLUES SINGERS

It was mostly *Crossroads Blues* really – there weren't albums in those days – but this stuff changed everything. Eric Clapton introduced me to a lot of those country-blues players – the phenomenal Skip James too – and I'm eternally grateful for that. The recordings may be a bit crackly, but they're fantastic.

The Beach Boys
PET SOUNDS

This record made me realise the possibilities that lie within pop or rock. There was so much more going on than you would find in any other pop at the time. I fell in love with it and I still play it. I haven't included any Beatles, which is a bit rude, but in my humble opinion *Pet Sounds* was at least as important as *Sgt. Pepper's*.

Bob Dylan
BLONDE ON BLONDE

This seemed to revolutionise the whole thing for me at the time. It was very fresh, with a live feel. It took me ages to really like Dylan, but this one really hit me. The solo folk thing was nice but I think this must have been his earliest album with an electric band, and that's what I loved about it. Some great songs on here, too.

Jimi Hendrix & The Experience
ELECTRIC LADYLAND

What can you say about this? I've got a copy Jimi signed for me on the wall of the room I'm sitting in right now! To me he's almost like a classical composer. I never thought of him as a guitarist, particularly. It's my feeling that if he was playing some other instrument he would still have been just as influential.

David Bowie
THE NEXT DAY

I've always been an admirer – and a mate – of David's and when he brought this out last year it gave me great encouragement because I was in the writing process for my own album. He's not quite as old as me, but I thought 'if he can still do it, maybe I can too'. I think he's done something very special with this record.

Earth
THE BEES MADE HONEY IN THE LION'S SKULL

I don't know anything about this band except I like them. One of my kids introduced me to them some time ago – I just ran with it, and now I love it. It's simple, meditative and esoteric. Sometimes there's just bass and drums, sometimes Hammond organ. It's minimalist but, to me, what they're doing actually speaks a lot.

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